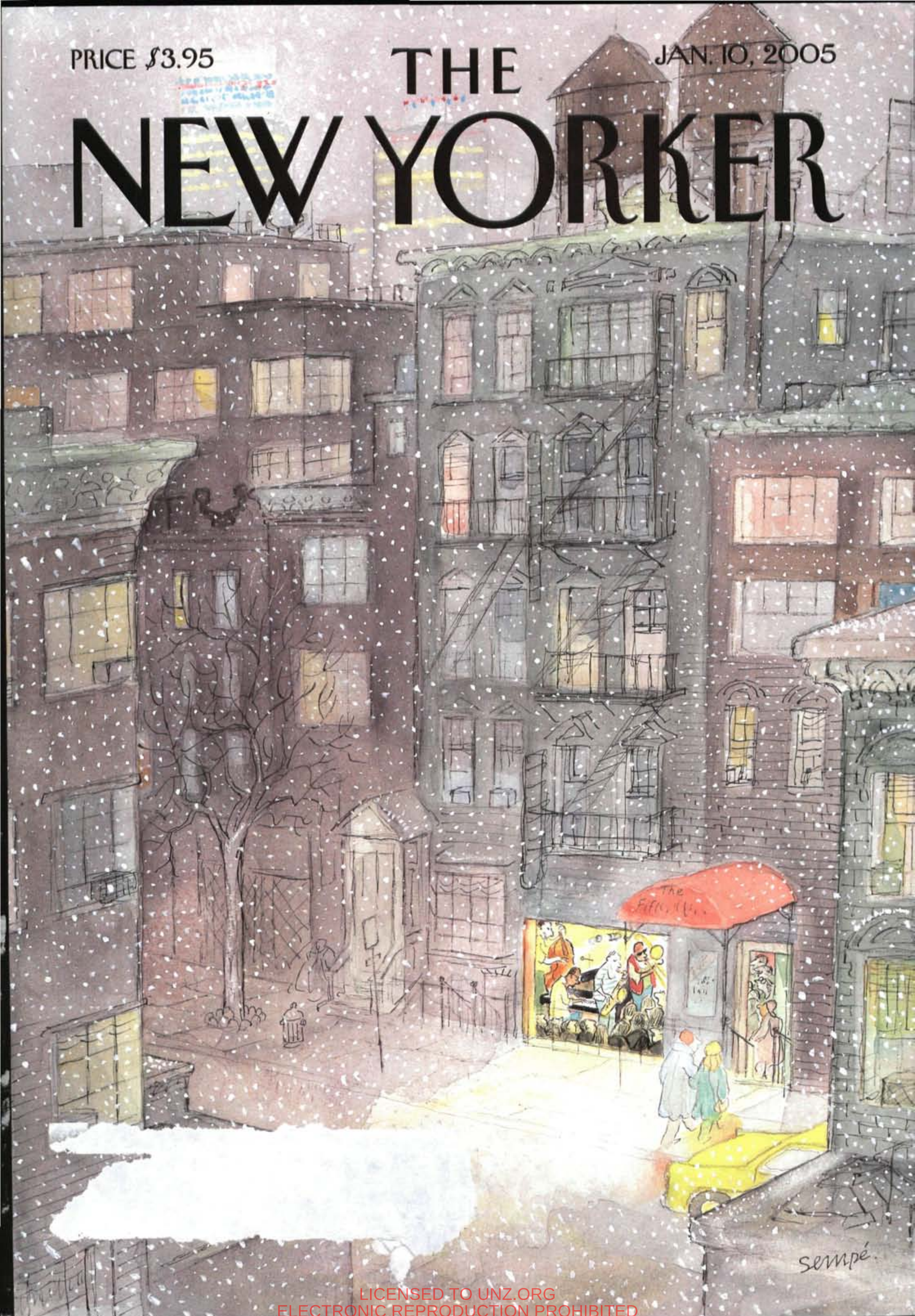
PRICE $3.95

THE NEW YORKER

JAN. 10, 2005



modern architecture
ideally situated 7BR
with contemporary
furnishings spacious
cathedral ceilings
and elegant finishes
throughout built-in
flat-screen TV room
for guests 24-hour
security central A/C
curb appeal galore

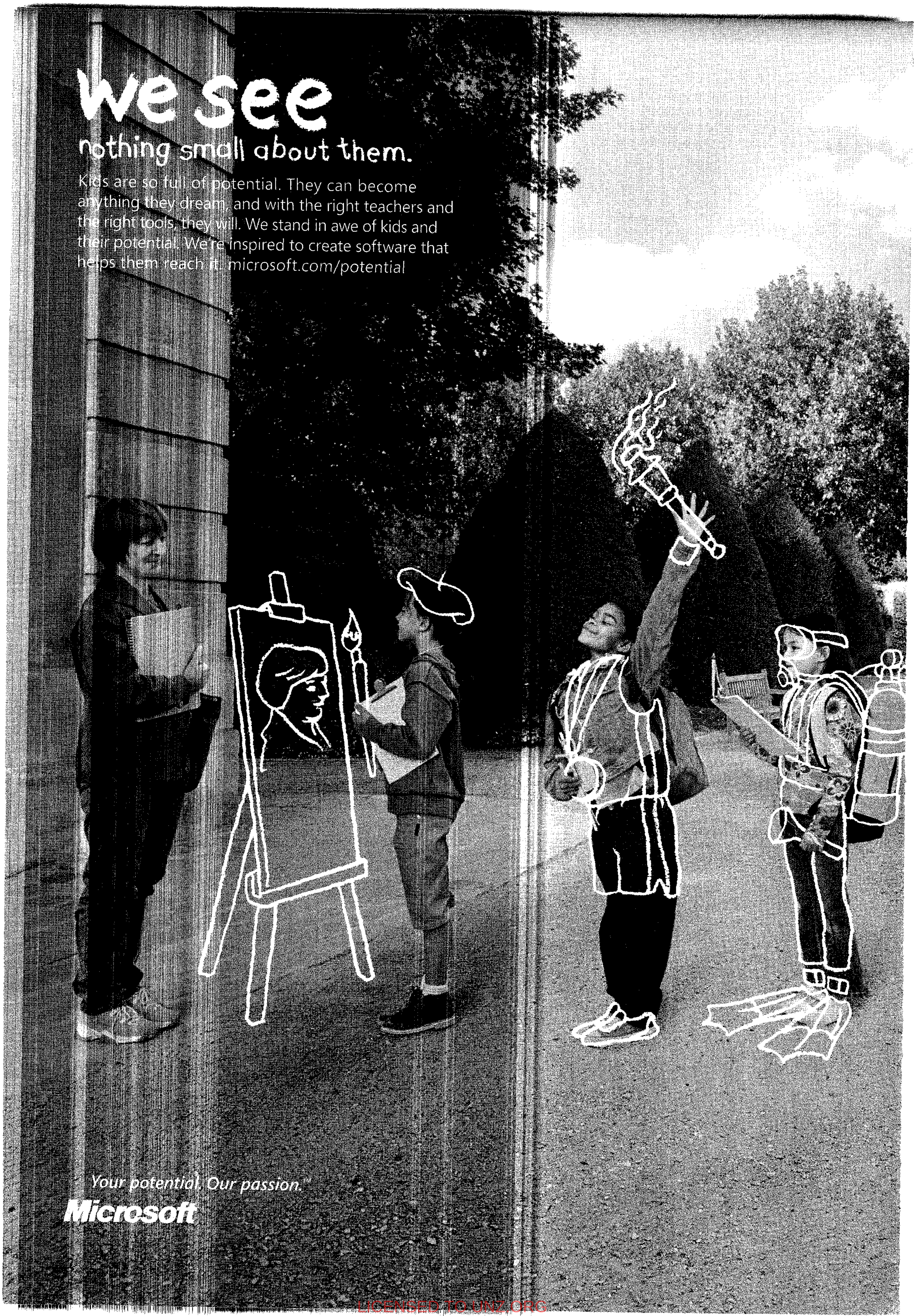
fits in your garage

[illegible]

[illegible] Infiniti QX56. Ready to move?

Welcome. Make yourself at home in any of the seven leather-appointed seats. Recline comfortably while enjoying available DVD entertainment, satellite radio* and the exhilaration of 315 hp. Apparently, home really is where the heart is. Surround yourself at Infiniti.com.

INFINITI

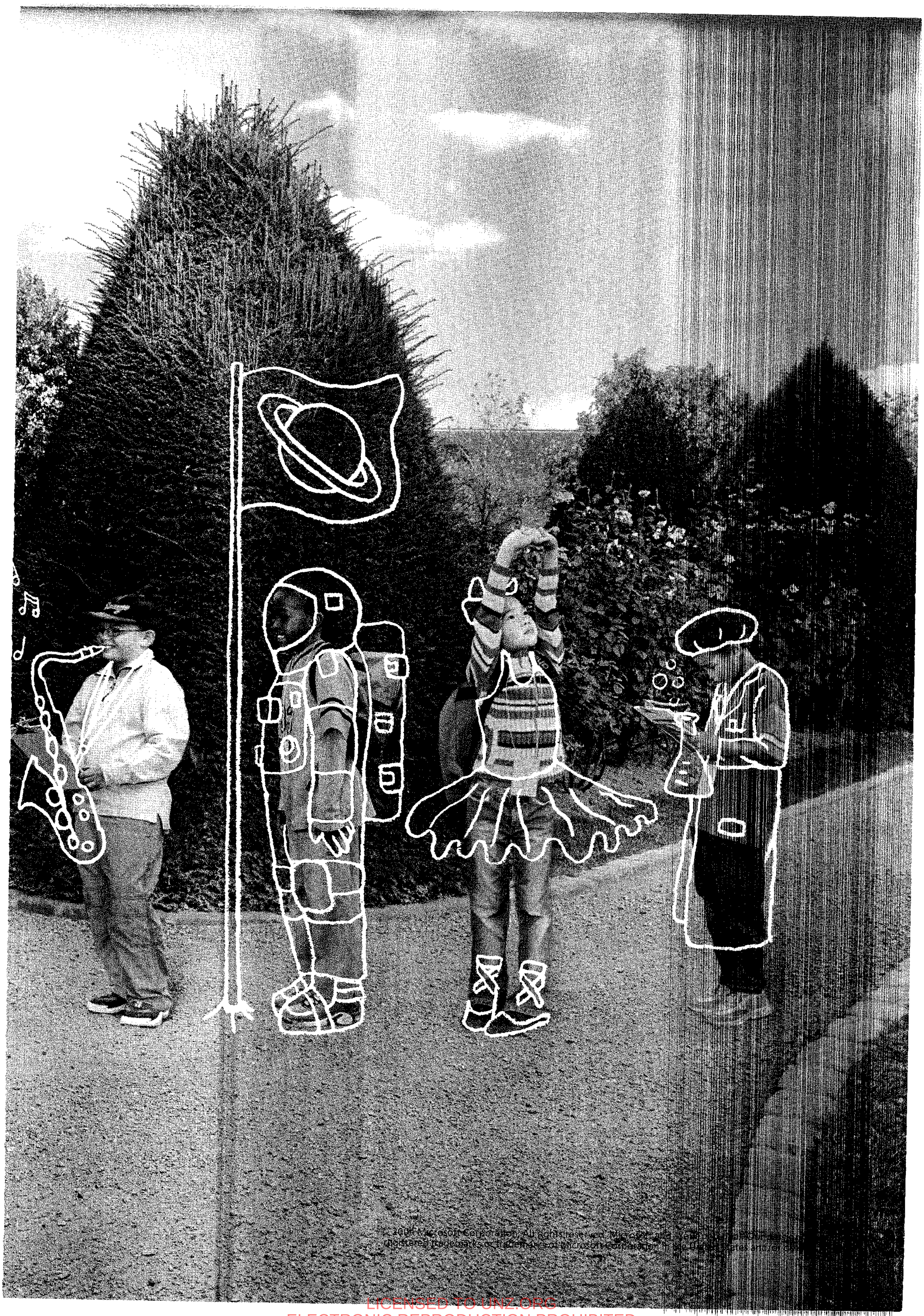


we see
nothing small about them.

Kids are so full of potential. They can become anything they dream, and with the right teachers and the right tools, they will. We stand in awe of kids and their potential. We're inspired to create software that helps them reach it. microsoft.com/potential

Your potential. Our passion.™

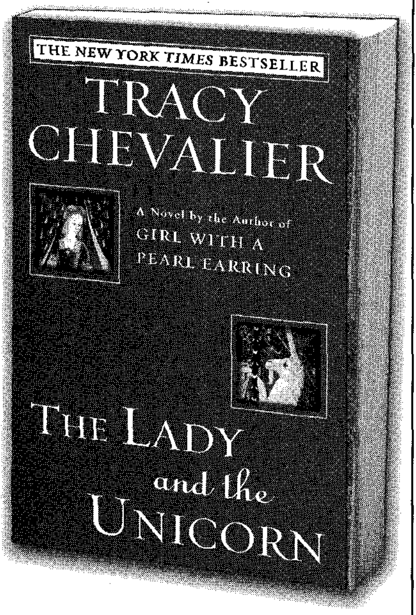
Microsoft



© 2008 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved. Microsoft and [illegible]
registered trademarks or trademarks of Microsoft Corporation in the United States and/or

THE *NEW YORK TIMES* BESTSELLER
NOW IN PAPERBACK

From the author of
Girl with a
Pearl Earring


THE NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER
TRACY CHEVALIER
A Novel by the Author of GIRL WITH A PEARL EARRING
THE LADY and the UNICORN

"Richly imagined...
a passionate, intricate novel."
—*Los Angeles Times*

"Lively, sexy, and thoroughly entertaining."
—*Entertainment Weekly*

"Great insight, invention and a remarkable eye for detail."
—*Washington Post*

Learn more about
THE LADY AND THE UNICORN
at www.tchevalier.com

Plume
A member of Penguin Group (USA) Inc.
Reading Group Guide available at
www.penguin.com

THE NEW YORKER

JANUARY 10, 2005

10 GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN
25 THE TALK OF THE TOWN
The tsunami disaster; Susan Sontag.

Jerome Groopman 32 ANNALS OF MEDICINE
The Pediatric Gap
Are prescription drugs safe for children?

Bruce McCall 38 SHOUTS & MURMURS
Air Pockets

Ian Frazier 40 PERSONAL HISTORY
Out of Ohio
How the Midwest made me.

James B. Stewart 46 THE WORLD OF BUSINESS
Partners
Michael Eisner got his best friend to help him run Disney. That was a big mistake.

Geraldine Brooks 58 LIFE AND LETTERS
Orpheus at the Plough
Louisa May Alcott's difficult father.

Edwidge Danticat 66 FICTION
"Reading Lessons"

THE CRITICS

Claudia Roth Pierpont 74 A CRITIC AT LARGE
George Gershwin, then and now.

81 BOOKS
Briefly Noted

Joan Acocella 82 DANCING
The Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo.

Sasha Frere-Jones 85 POP MUSIC
Meet the mashups.

David Denby 87 THE CURRENT CINEMA
"Spanglish," "The Assassination of Richard Nixon."

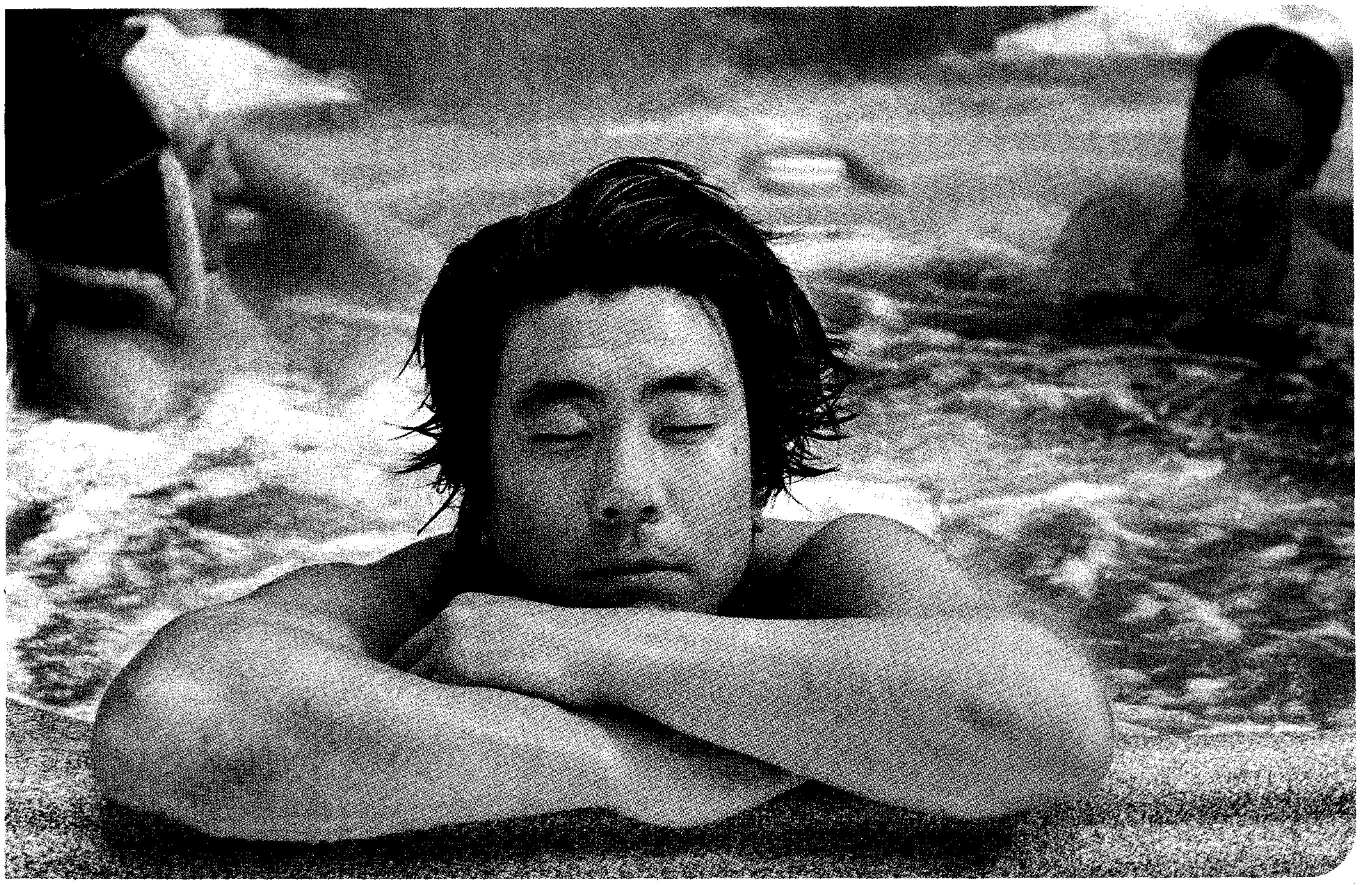
POEMS

Charles Wright 26 "The Woodpecker Pecks, But the Hole Does Not Appear"
Jack Gilbert 36 "Refusing Heaven"
Frank Bidart 52 "The Soldier Who Guards the Frontier"
Yehuda Amichai 90 "Now, When the Waters Are Pressing Mightily"

COVER *"Hot Spot," by J.J. Sempé* DRAWINGS *Danny Shanahan, John O'Brien, Michael Shaw, Mike Twohy, David Sipress, Leo Cullum, Bruce Eric Kaplan, Charles Barsotti, Robert Weber, Frank Cotham, Michael Maslin, Roz Chast, Christopher Weyant, Robert Leighton, Erik Hilgerdt, Mick Stevens, Kim Warp*

www.newyorker.com

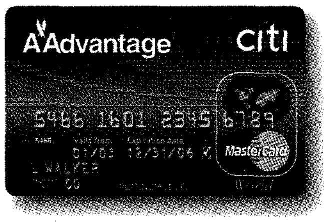
Isn't it strange that your dry cleaning got you to a place where you don't even have to wear pants?

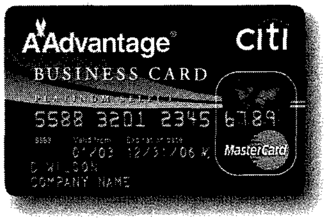


Whether you're buying a fax machine or a coffeemaker, the Citi® / AAdvantage® credit cards can help make your wildest travel dreams a reality. With the American Airlines AAdvantage program, you get the most destinations* worldwide and there are no blackout dates on award seats*. And with Purchase Protection*, you can concentrate on what matters most, like nothing at all.

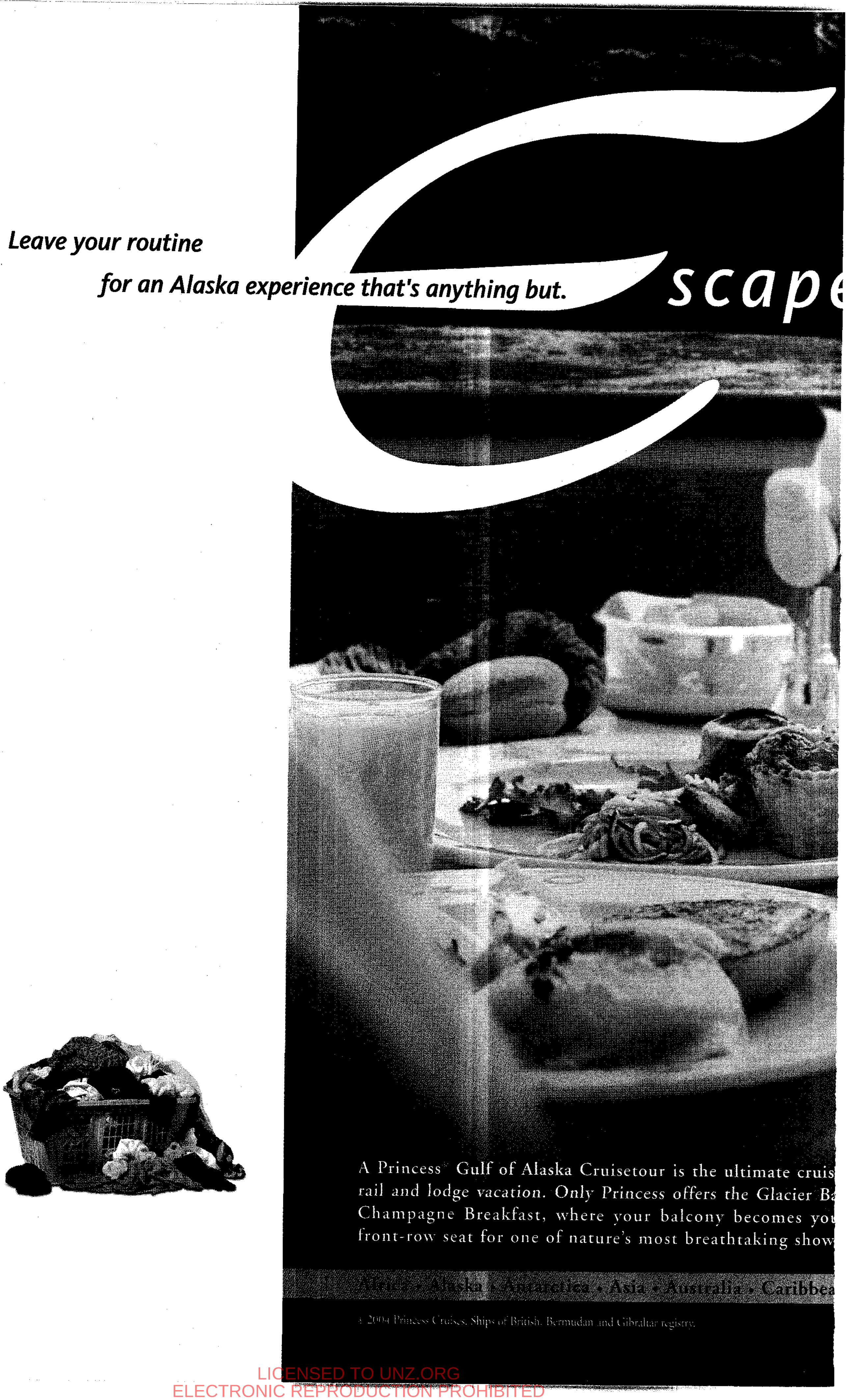
1-800-Fly-4444 citibank.com/aadvantage

citi® | AmericanAirlines® AAdvantage®





*The AAdvantage program has eliminated blackout dates on award travel on American Airlines®, American Eagle® and AmericanConnection® service. Flight awards are subject to AAdvantage® program rules and restrictions. Seats for award travel are limited, and may not be available on all flights. Destinations include those served by AAdvantage participant airlines. Miles may not expire provided that once every three years you (i) fly on American Airlines, American Eagle or AmericanConnection carriers or an airline participant in the AAdvantage program or (ii) have qualifying AAdvantage participant account activity. Miles are earned on purchases only. The maximum number of AAdvantage miles you can earn is 60,000 per calendar year with the Citi® / AAdvantage® card and the Citi® Gold / AAdvantage® World MasterCard®, 100,000 miles per calendar year with the Citi® Gold / AAdvantage Card and the Citi® Platinum Select® / AAdvantage World MasterCard®, and 150,000 per calendar year with the Citi® Platinum Select® / AAdvantage® Business Card (purchases recorded on your Jan. - Dec. billing statements). AAdvantage Executive Platinum®, AAdvantage Platinum® and AAdvantage Gold® members are exempt from these limits. AmericanAirlines, American Eagle, AmericanConnection, AAdvantage, AAdvantage Executive Platinum, AAdvantage Platinum and AAdvantage Gold are registered trademarks of American Airlines, Inc. American Eagle and AmericanConnection carriers are American Airlines regional airline associates. AmericanConnection service is operated by one of the following independent contractors: Trans State Airlines, Inc., Chautauqua Airlines, Inc. or Corporate Airlines, Inc. American Airlines reserves the right to change the AAdvantage program at any time without notice and to end the AAdvantage program with six months' notice. American Airlines is not responsible for products or services offered by other participating companies. For complete details about the AAdvantage program, call 1-800-882-8880 or visit www.aa.com/aadvantage Purchase Protection is for Gold and Platinum Select cardmembers: Buyers Security℠ coverage is underwritten by Triton Insurance Company. Purchase Assurance® coverage is underwritten by Virginia Surety Company, Inc. Purchase Security is underwritten by Indemnity Insurance Company of North America. Certain conditions, restrictions and exclusions apply. Details of coverage are provided upon cardmembership. ©2004 Citibank (South Dakota), N.A. Citi, Citibank, and Citi with Arc Design are registered marks of Citicorp.



Leave your routine

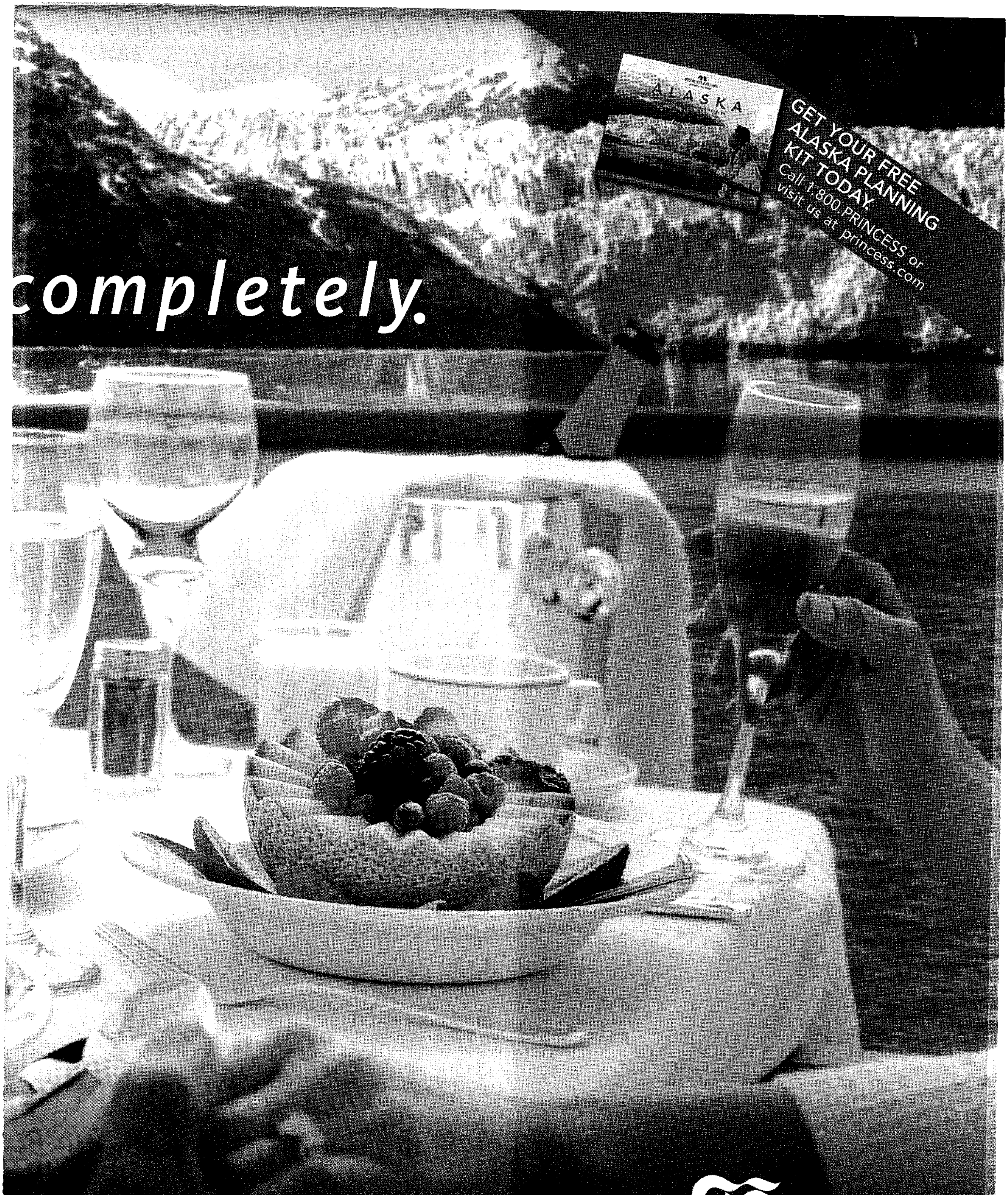
for an Alaska experience that's anything but.

A Princess® Gulf of Alaska Cruisetour is the ultimate cruis
rail and lodge vacation. Only Princess offers the Glacier B
Champagne Breakfast, where your balcony becomes yo
front-row seat for one of nature's most breathtaking show

Africa • Alaska • Antarctica • Asia • Australia • Caribbe

© 2004 Princess Cruises. Ships of British, Bermudan and Gibraltar registry.

ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



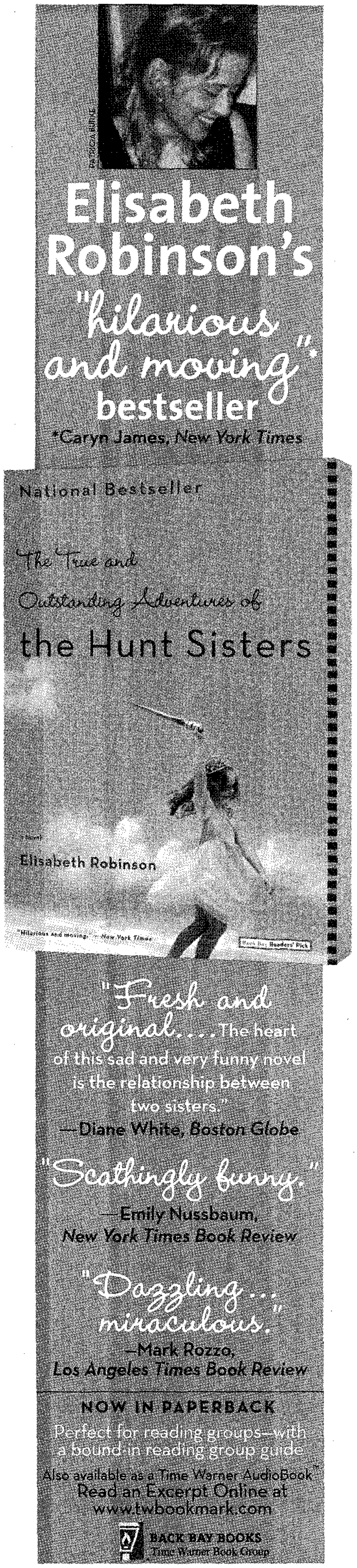
completely.

GET YOUR FREE ALASKA PLANNING KIT TODAY.
Call 1.800.PRINCESS or visit us at princess.com

Two glacier-viewing opportunities – Glacier Bay and College Fjord. Five wilderness lodges in the best locations. And luxury rail cars hat take you straight from the ship for more time at spectacular Denali National Park. Book your complete escape today.

PRINCESS CRUISES
escape completely℠

Europe • Greece • Hawaii • India • New Zealand • Panama Canal • Russia • South America • Tahiti


PATRICIA BURKE
Elisabeth Robinson's "hilarious and moving"* bestseller
*Caryn James, New York Times
National Bestseller
The True and Outstanding Adventures of the Hunt Sisters
Elisabeth Robinson
"Fresh and original. . . . The heart of this sad and very funny novel is the relationship between two sisters."
—Diane White, Boston Globe
"Scathingly funny."
—Emily Nussbaum, New York Times Book Review
"Dazzling . . . miraculous."
—Mark Rozzo, Los Angeles Times Book Review
NOW IN PAPERBACK
Perfect for reading groups—with a bound-in reading group guide
Also available as a Time Warner AudioBook
Read an Excerpt Online at www.twbookmark.com
BACK BAY BOOKS
Time Warner Book Group

CONTRIBUTORS

James B. Stewart ("Partners," p. 46), who has been a contributor since 1993, is the author of eight books, including "DisneyWar," which is coming out in March.

Akash Kapur (The Talk of the Town, p. 25) has written for *The Atlantic Monthly*, *The Economist*, and *Slate*.

Bruce McCall (Shouts & Murmurs, p. 38) has been contributing to the magazine since 1979.

Rebecca Mead (The Talk of the Town, p. 27) is a staff writer.

Geraldine Brooks ("Orpheus at the Plough," p. 58) has written two nonfiction books and two novels, including the forthcoming "March," which was partly inspired by the life of Bronson Alcott.

Edwidge Danticat (Fiction, p. 66), whose most recent novel is "The Dew Breaker," has a young-adult book, "Anacaona, Golden Flower," coming out this spring.

Jerome Groopman ("The Pediatric Gap," p. 32) is the Recanati Professor of Medicine at Harvard. His book "The Anatomy of Hope: How People Prevail in the Face of Illness" will be out in paperback this month.

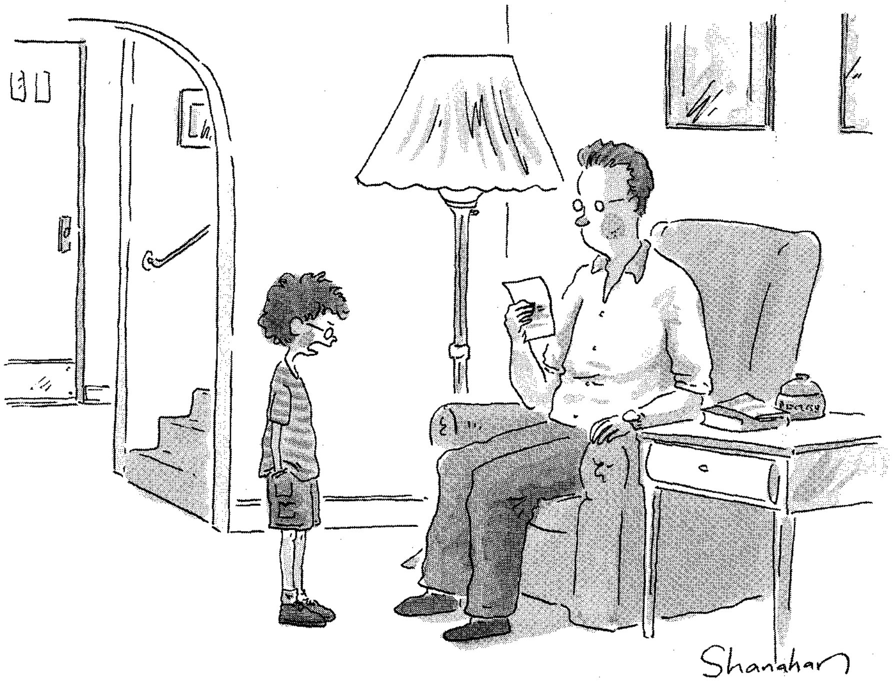
Ian Frazier ("Out of Ohio," p. 40) will publish a collection of his pieces about New York City in the fall.

Claudia Roth Pierpont (A Critic at Large, p. 74) is the author of "Passionate Minds," a collection of essays about women writers.

Frank Bidart (Poem, p. 52) is the author of six collections of poems, including "Star Dust," which will be published in May.

Sasha Frere-Jones (Pop Music, p. 85) is the magazine's pop-music critic.

Yehuda Amichai (Poem, p. 90) died in September, 2000. "Open Closed Open," a selection of his poems, came out in April of that year. ♦



"Unfortunately, the urine test counted for half of the grade."

THE MAIL

WHAT WE CAN'T SEE

The capabilities of mammography have certainly, in some cases, been exaggerated, as Malcolm Gladwell suggests ("The Picture Problem," December 13th). But Gladwell errs in the other direction: he overemphasizes the complexities of mammography and trivializes the benefits. Mammograms can be difficult to interpret. And yet, in some trials, mammography screening has been shown to decrease the death rate from breast cancer by twenty-five to thirty per cent. Widespread screening began in the United States in the nineteen-eighties. Soon after, for the first time in fifty years, the death rate from breast cancer began to fall, and it has decreased by twenty per cent since 1990. None of us is trumpeting victory, but this is a major improvement—thousands of lives have been saved—that is due, in great measure, to mammography screening. We and other researchers are working hard to find ways to detect cancers, but women, informed that the test is far from perfect, should still be encouraged to take advantage of its potential benefits today.

Daniel B. Kopans
Professor of Radiology, Harvard Medical School; Director of Breast Imaging, Massachusetts General Hospital
Boston, Mass.

Gladwell rightly points out that the losses of American planes and pilots in the Schweinfurt bombing raids in 1943 were "staggering" (about twenty per cent) and the results meagre. But, in concluding that "the problem was that the picture Air Force officers had of their target didn't tell them what they really needed to know," he passes over the real "Schweinfurt problem": the U.S. commanders' decision to send the bombers during the day. (After all, the raid caused some damage, just not enough to justify the cost.) Hours after Schweinfurt, British bombers targeted the V-rocket production site at Peenemünde. That raid was a great success. It set back V-rocket production by more than two months, which Churchill later wrote was "of capital importance." Losses were only seven per cent, because the British knew that nighttime was the right time for bombing—a truism denied by the obstinate Americans.

Paul Reid
West Palm Beach, Fla.

Gladwell offers an incomplete picture of how medical-screening results should be used. A test is not final or absolute. It is data for making decisions; however, for a physician to determine what to do for a patient clinical judgment is required. Unfortunately, many physicians find it hard to use such a subjective process well, and are influenced by a perception of the infallibility of technology. This can lead to needless surgery, anxiety, and misuse of the doctor-patient relationship.

Cecil H. Fox
Little Rock, Ark.

Gladwell quotes Albert Speer as saying, in reference to the results of Schweinfurt, that "not a tank, plane, or other piece of weaponry failed to be produced because of lack of ball bearings." Gladwell takes this as evidence that the enterprise was misguided—that the Allies overestimated the importance of the target. But a fuller citation from Speer's memoirs suggests that the failure was one of strategy, not technology or intelligence: "After this first blow we were forced back on the ball-bearing stocks. . . . We soon consumed these. . . . At the beginning of April 1944, however, the attacks on the ball-bearing industry ceased abruptly. Thus, the Allies threw away success when it was already in their hands. Had they continued the attacks of March and April with the same energy, we would quickly have been at our last gasp."

David E. Bosley
Grifton, N.C.

•

Letters should be sent with the writer's name, address, and daytime phone number via e-mail to themail@newyorker.com. They can also be faxed to 212-286-5047. Letters may be edited for length and clarity, and may be published in any medium. All letters become the property of The New Yorker and will not be returned; we regret that owing to the volume of correspondence we cannot reply to every letter.

STORY TIME
FOR
GROWN-UPS

SELECTED
SHORTS

Jan 12
Cynthia Nixon

Jan 12: Risky Business
Jan 26: The Story Prize
Feb 16: Funny Fictions
Mar 2: Women with Plans

THALIA
BOOK CLUB

Paul Auster
Jan 19

Jan 19: *Oracle Night*
with Paul Auster

Feb 2: *Before the Frost*
with Henning Mankell

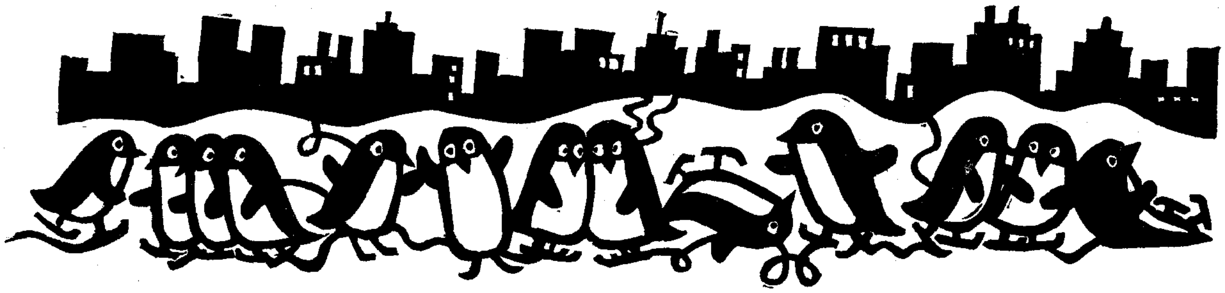
Feb 9: *The Creative Habit*
with Twyla Tharp

symphonyspace 95th & bway

The most intimate place to see
artists do what they love.

Order Now!
symphony space.org
or 212.864 .5400

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN



S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			5	6	7	8
9	10	11				

For expanded events listings, please visit www.newyorker.com/goingson.

THIS WEEK
THE WORLD OF MUSIC

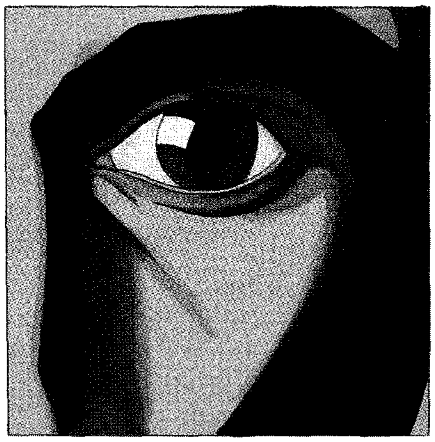
Scholars and critics can debate the precise meaning of the phrase "world music" ad nauseam—and they no doubt will—but fans of exotic sounds can get a crash course at Globalfest, a one-night summary of what's happening beyond our borders. The shows are concentrated on three stages at the Public Theatre, sparing listeners jet lag and giving them a chance to hear the powerfully mesmerizing Malian vocalist Rokia Traoré, the electronica-tinged Argentinean folksinger Juana Molina, and Mory Kanté, a crossover success from Guinea who will be making his first New York City appearance in nearly two decades. (Jan. 8; see Night Life.)

KAFKA ONSTAGE

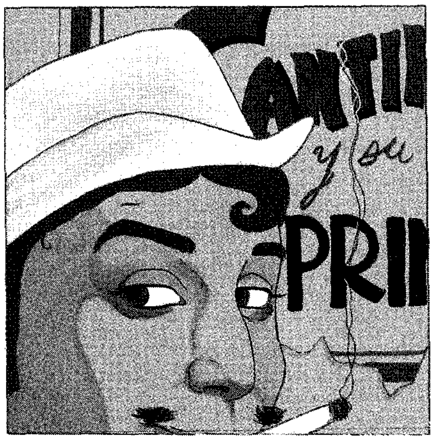
The soprano Dawn Upshaw has never been a timid artist, but her latest collaboration with the radical director Peter Sellars may be her most daring yet: a staged version of György Kurtág's "Kafka Fragments," a deeply intimate sequence of songs for soprano and solo violin, with texts drawn from the writer's letters and diaries. Geoff Nuttall, from the St. Lawrence String Quartet, joins the adventure. (Zankel Hall, Jan. 10 and Jan. 12-13; see Classical Music.)

RADAR LOVE

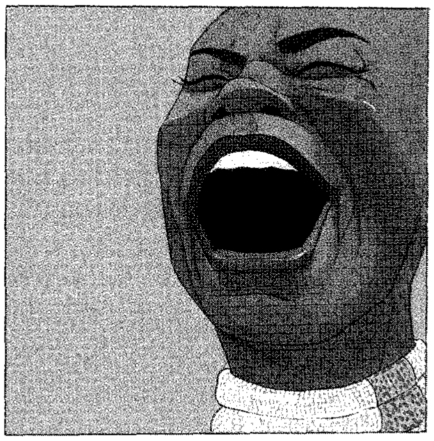
The New Year kicks off with the "Under the Radar" festival, a loosely connected set of independent theatre productions staged at four locations in Manhattan and Brooklyn. The pieces include Cynthia Hopkins's amnesia-themed operetta, "Accidental Nostalgia"; Herbert Sigüenza's "¡Cantinflas!," which pays homage to the famed comic actor known as the "Charlie Chaplin of Mexico"; and the Foundry Theatre's "K.I. from 'Crime,' " an idiosyncratic adaptation of Dostoyevsky's "Crime and Punishment" that focusses on the wake that Katerina Ivanovna Marmeladova throws for her dead husband. For a full schedule, see www.artsatstanns.org. (Starts Jan. 7; see Theatre.)



Dawn Upshaw, in György Kurtág's "Kafka Fragments," at Zankel Hall.



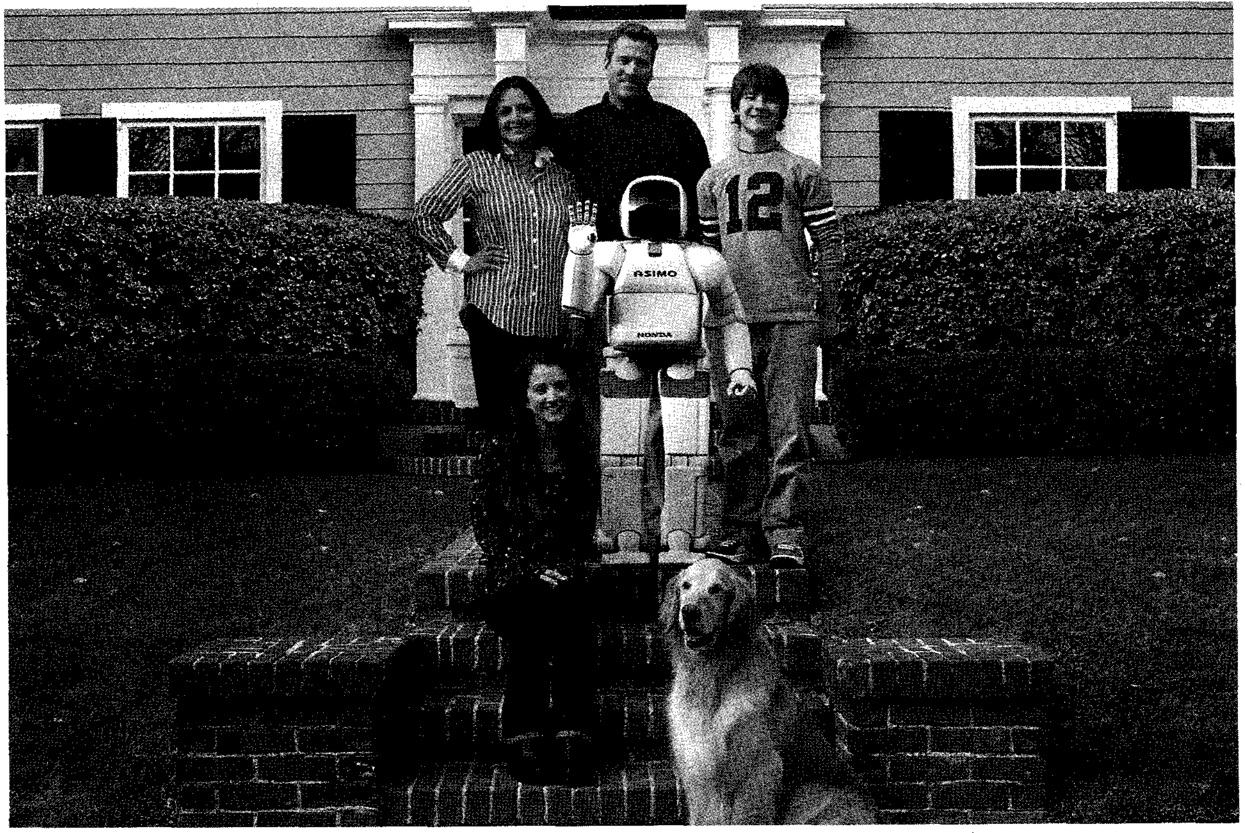
Herbert Sigüenza as Cantinflas, in the "Under the Radar" festival.



LARA TOMLIN

The Malian singer Rokia Traoré, in Globalfest, at the Public Theatre.

©2002 American Honda Motor Co., Inc. honda.com



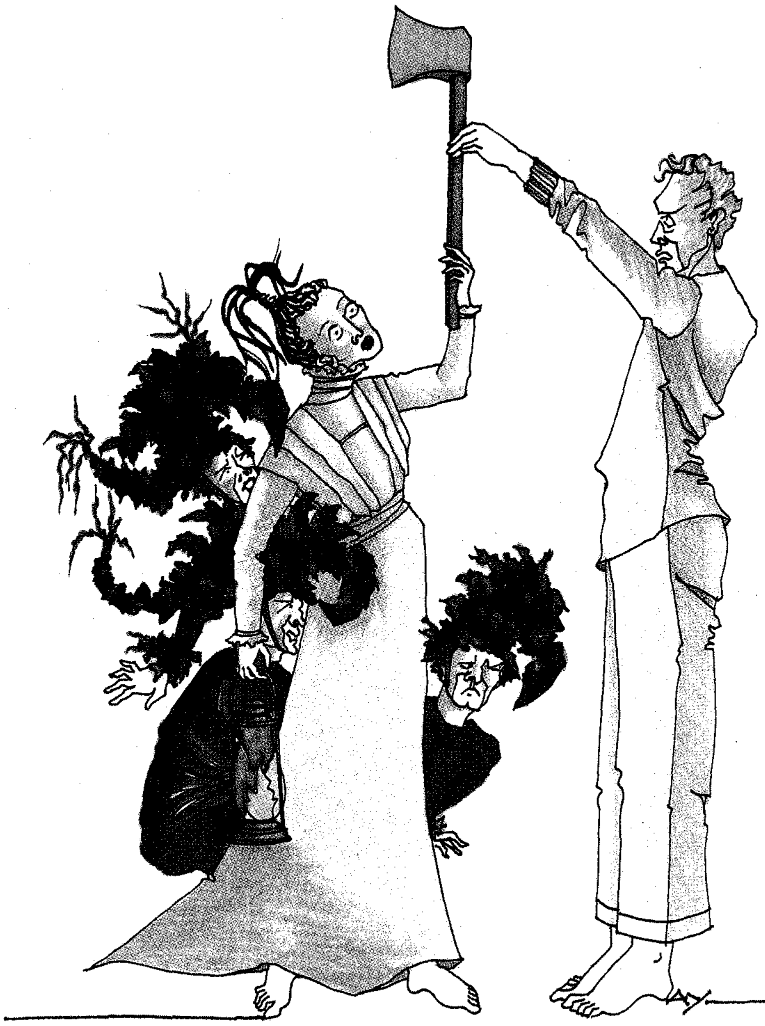
We're building a dream, one robot at a time.

The dream was simple. Design a robot that, one day, could duplicate the complexities of human motion and actually help people. An easy task? Hardly. But after more than 15 years of research and development, the result is ASIMO, an advanced robot with unprecedented human-like abilities. ASIMO walks forward and backward, turns corners, and goes up and down stairs with ease. All with a remarkable sense of strength and balance.

The future of this exciting technology is even more promising. ASIMO has the potential to respond to simple voice commands, recognize faces, carry loads and even push wheeled objects. This means that, one day, ASIMO could be quite useful in some very important tasks. Like assisting the elderly, and even helping with household chores. In essence, ASIMO might serve as another set of eyes, ears and legs for all kinds of people in need.

All of this represents the steps we're taking to develop products that make our world a better place. And in ASIMO's case, it's a giant step in the right direction.

HONDA
The Power of Dreams



"Screaming Shrubbery," by Third Rail Dance, at the Merce Cunningham Studio.

ANITA YAVICH

THE THEATRE
OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.

BELIZE
The Obie-winning company the Talking Band presents a new musical, set in Belize and England in the eighteenth century, about a romance between an Irish-born colonel and a half-African woman he meets in the colonies. Written and directed by Paul Zimet, with music by Ellen Maddow. Previews begin Jan. 6. Opens Jan. 8 at 7:30. (La Mama, 74A E. 4th St. 212-475-7710.)

CULTUREMART
HERE, the multidisciplinary downtown arts center, presents its annual festival of works by artists-in-residence. Highlights include a puppet musical version of "Alice in Wonderland," by the rising puppeteer Lake Simons; the image-driven theatre piece "Phenomenon," by Alyse Rothman; "Café Antarsia," an opera set in a mythic taverna on Crete; and Freefall's physical-theatre piece "Clever Hans." Jan. 5-16. (145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 212-868-4444.)

THE GODS ARE POUNDING MY HEAD! (LUMBERJACK MESSIAHS)
Richard Foreman's newest metaphysical dramatic effort stars the Ontological Theatre veterans Jay Smith and T. Ryder Smith and the newcomer Charlotta Mohlin. Previews begin Jan. 6. (St. Mark's In-the-Bowery, Second Ave. at 10th St. 212-533-4650.)

GOOD VIBRATIONS
More than thirty songs by Brian Wilson and the Beach Boys form the backdrop for this musical, about a group of East Coast teen-agers who head to California in search of surf and sun. Directed and choreographed by John Carrafa. In previews. (Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200.)

HAROLD & MAUDE: THE MUSICAL
Estelle Parsons is Maude and Eric Millegan is Harold, in a musical adaptation of Colin Higgins's 1971 cult film (directed by Hal Ashby), about a romance between a young man and an eighty-year-old woman. Book and lyrics by Tom Jones ("The Fantasticks") and music by Joseph Thalken. Directed by Mark S. Hoebee. Previews begin Jan. 5. Opens Jan. 9 at 7:30. (Paper Mill Playhouse, Brookside Dr., Millburn, N.J. 973-376-4343.)

INNOCENTS
Ripe Time presents a stage version of Edith Wharton's "The House of Mirth," adapted by Rachel Dickstein and Emily Morse and directed by Ms. Dickstein. Previews begin Jan. 8. Opens Jan. 10 at 8. (Ohio, 56 Wooster St. 212-868-4444.)

K.I. FROM "CRIME"
The Russian director Kama Ginkas makes his New York début with his adaptation of Dostoyevsky's "Crime and Punishment." Presented by the Foundry Theatre, in association with the Baryshnikov Dance Foundation and Chashama. Part of the "Under the Radar" festival (see This Week). Previews begin Jan. 5. Opens Jan. 10 at 7:30. (Freight Entrance Theatre, 208 W. 37th St. 212-864-4444.)

LITTLE WOMEN
Sutton Foster ("Thoroughly Modern Millie") is Jo and Maureen McGovern is Marmee, in a new musical inspired by Louisa May Alcott's novel about four American sisters of the Civil War era. Book by Alan Knee, lyrics by Mindi Dickstein, and music by Jason Howland. Directed by Susan H. Schulman and choreographed by Michael Lichtefeld. In previews. (Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 212-239-6200.)

THE PIRATES OF PENZANCE
The New York Gilbert & Sullivan Players present the operetta, in the year of its hundred-and-twenty-fifth anniversary. Hal Linden stars. Directed by Albert Bergeret. Opens Jan. 7 at 8. Through Jan. 23. (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212.)

UNDER THE RADAR
A new festival created by Arts at St. Ann's and Mark Russell (formerly of P.S. 122) presents eight productions at four locations in Manhattan and Brooklyn (see This Week). Jan. 7-10. (For more information, visit www.artsatstanns.org. 718-254-8779.)

OPENED RECENTLY

AFTER THE BALL
The Irish Repertory Theatre follows up last summer's gem of a production of "Finian's Rainbow" with the American première of a musical written by Noël Coward fifty years ago, based on Oscar Wilde's "Lady Windermere's Fan." Now we can admire forgotten Coward lyrics ("contumely" rhymes with "gloomily"; "daffier" with "raffia") and hear Wilde's acid reflections on the male sex delivered in dulcet tones by the lovely, clear-voiced Kristin Huxhold. Barry Day's deft adaptation adds a narrator, the Duchess of Berwick (the winningly assured Kathleen Widdoes), to introduce the scenes and speed the action. The result is a modest yet disarming piece, performed by an exceptional cast. Tony Walton directs. (132 W. 22nd St. 212-727-2737.)

DEMOCRACY
A strong production of Michael Frayn's play about the popular German Chancellor Willy Brandt (James Naughton) and the East German mole Günter Guillaume (Richard Thomas), who served him and eventually sank him. Directed by Michael Blakemore. (Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 212-307-4100.)

DOUBT
John Patrick Shanley's well-told tale about possible sexual abuse in a Catholic school pits a battle-axe mother superior against a popular priest. The cast is superb—the rebarbative Cherry Jones dukes it out with a charismatic Brían F. O'Byrne while Heather Goldenhersh tempers the simmering cauldron of ill will with her fetching sweetness. (Reviewed in our issue of 12/13/04.) (Manhattan Theatre Club at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212.)

FAT PIG
The leads of Neil LaBute's new play are Tom (the excellent Jeremy Piven), a successful executive who is neat, careful, well-spoken, charmingly average and conformist, and Helen (the compelling Ashlie Atkinson), a librarian who weighs in the neighborhood of two hundred and fifty pounds. When the two of them meet at a restaurant, there is a rapport. Tom gets her number. Helen leaves. Then, in the sort of theatrical choice that makes LaBute such a fascinating writer, Helen returns to speak her heart. "Please do not let yourself be afraid of me or of taking some kind of blind chance, or what people think," she tells him. "Because this could be so great." Helen acts on her desires. But Tom, we soon learn, is one of those stuck adolescent souls who play life not to win but to not lose. Directed by Jo Bonney. (1/3/05) (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 212-279-4200.)

FRANKENSTEIN
Mary Shelley's horror story is adapted by the Flying Machine, in a multimedia production directed by Joshua Carlbach. (SoHo Rep, 46 Walker St. 212-868-7444. Through Jan. 16.)

GEM OF THE OCEAN
Set in the Hill District of Pittsburgh in 1904, "Gem" is the latest, and the introductory, installment to August Wilson's magnificent ten-play cycle, in which each play dramatizes a decade of the roiling African-American experience of the twentieth century. As the play opens, Citizen Barlow (John Earl Jelks), a young man born into freedom and named for its promise, bursts into the home of Aunt Ester Tyler (Phylicia Rashad), a two-hundred-and-eighty-five-year-old conjure woman who is the repository of the race's historical memory. As Ester, Rashad turns in an eerily inspired performance of old age. She has abdicated glamour and the desire

to be adorable; as a result, detachment and coyness give way to daring and compassion. Well directed by Kenny Leon. (12/20 & 27/04) (Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200.)

A NUMBER
Sam Shepard, seated at one end of a leather couch, undergoes a series of awkward confrontations with a number of his cloned offspring (all played with haunting credibility and both subtle and unsubtle differences by Dallas Roberts). The production's appeal has more to do with the gravitational pull of Shepard's charisma and the nuanced neediness Roberts projects (in each incarnation) than with Caryl Churchill's writing, which feels both spare and repetitive—less like a play than a series of variations on one thesis. (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE RIVALS
Richard Brinsley Sheridan's featherlight comedy about headstrong heirs and heiresses and their foolish guardians receives a sparkling production at Lincoln Center. John Lee Beatty's set of eighteenth-century Bath is uncommonly well realized, and its authentic flavor is aided by Jess Goldstein's richly hued, intricate costumes—particularly the gowns worn by Lydia Languish (played with willful charm by Emily Bergl) and by the bossy, language-mangling Mrs. Malaprop (the divine Dana Ivey). Of the many fine men in the cast, Matt Letscher, as Lydia's devoted, tormented suitor, stands out for his manly vivacity. Directed by Mark Lamos. (Vivian Beaumont. 212-239-6200.)

THEY ALL KNEW
A pleasingly old-fashioned musical with frothy melodies and complex harmonies, written by Robert Mitchell (creator of the 2003 Off-Off Broadway hit "Vincent"). After the death of his reproving father (David Tillistrand), a young composer (Adam MacDonald) looks backward, searching for a biological basis for the lifelong tension between father and son. Directed by Judith Fredricks. (Wings, 154 Christopher St. 212-627-2961. Through Jan. 22.)

ALSO PLAYING

AGA-BOOM
New Victory, 209 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200. Through Jan. 16.

AVENUE Q
Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.

THE BALTIMORE WALTZ
Peter Norton Space, 555 W. 42nd St. 212-244-7529. (Through Jan. 9.)

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST
Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 212-307-4747.

BROOKLYN: THE MUSICAL
Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.

BUG
Barrow Street Theatre, 27 Barrow St., at Seventh Ave. 212-239-6200.

LA CAGE AUX FOLLES
Marquis, Broadway at 46th St. 212-307-4100.

CHICAGO
Ambassador, 215 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200.

DAME EDNA: BACK WITH A VENGEANCE!
Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.

DAVE GORMAN'S GOOGLEWHACK! ADVENTURE
Village Theatre, 158 Bleecker St. 212-307-4100. (Closes Jan. 9.)

FIDDLER ON THE ROOF
Minskoff, 200 W. 45th St. 212-307-4100.

THE FOREIGNER
Roundabout at Laura Pels, 111 W. 46th St. 212-719-1300.

HAIRSPRAY
Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 212-307-4100.

JEWTOPIA
Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 212-239-6200.

LONE STAR LOVE
John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200.

MAMMA MIA!
Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 212-563-5544.

MODERN ORTHODOX
Dodger Stages, 340 W. 50th St. 212-239-6200.

MOVIN' OUT
Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 212-307-4100.

NEWSICAL
Upstairs at Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 212-307-4100.

'NIGHT, MOTHER
Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. (Through Jan. 9.)

9 PARTS OF DESIRE
Manhattan Ensemble Theatre, 55 Mercer St. 212-239-6200.

PACIFIC OVERTURES
Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 212-719-1300.

THE PRODUCERS
St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.

A SECOND HAND MEMORY
Atlantic, 336 W. 20th St. 212-239-6200.

700 SUNDAYS
Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.

SLAVA'S SNOWSHOW
Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 212-505-0700.

SOUVENIR
York Theatre at St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. 212-868-4444.

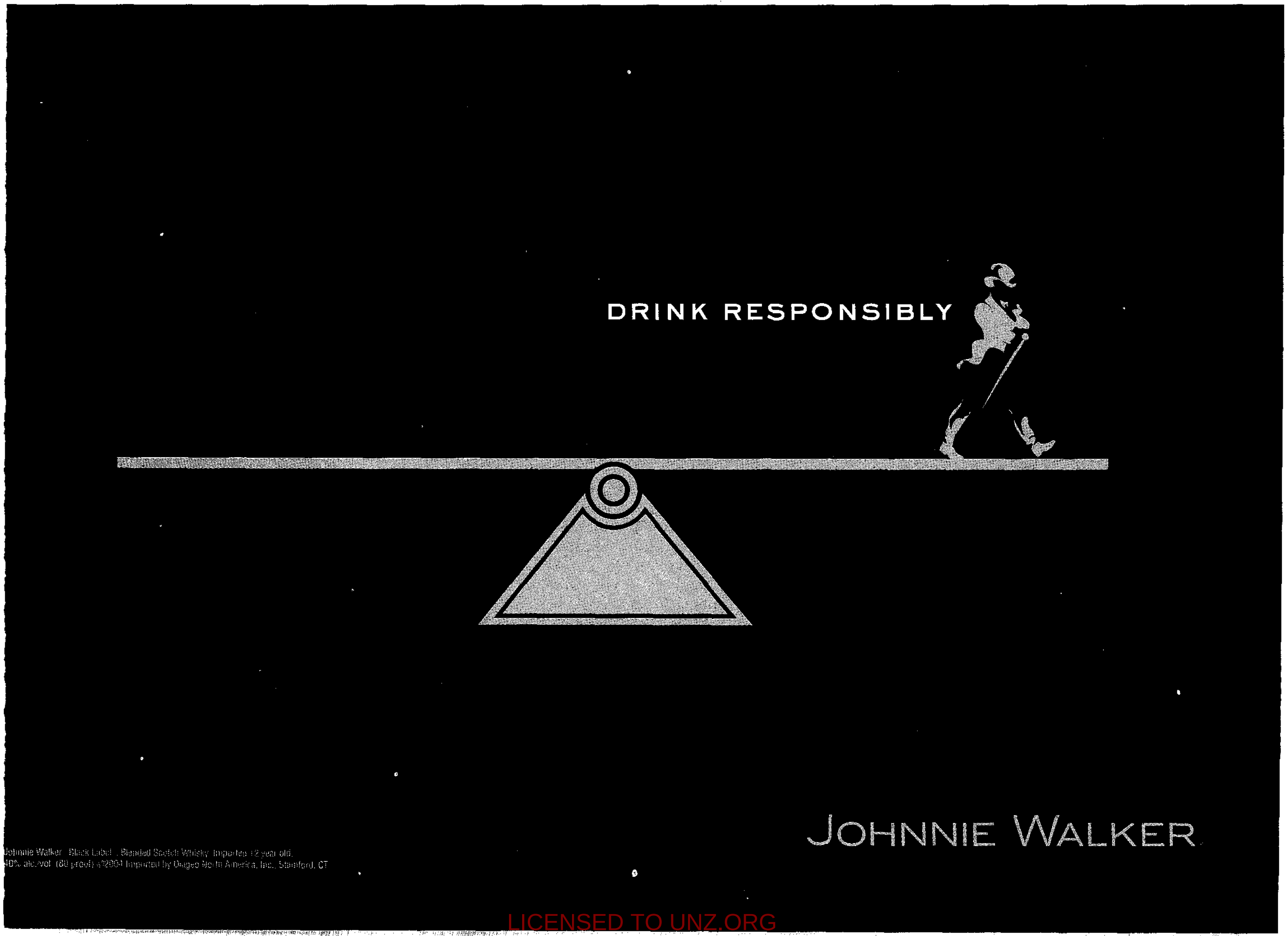
STOMP
Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at 8th St. 212-477-2477.

TWELVE ANGRY MEN
American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 212-719-1300.

WHOOPI
Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.

WICKED
Gershwin, 222 W. 51st St. 212-307-4100.

WONDERFUL TOWN
Al Hirschfeld, 302 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.


DRINK RESPONSIBLY
JOHNNIE WALKER
Johnnie Walker® Black Label® Blended Scotch Whisky. Imported. 12 year old.
40% alc./vol. (80 proof) ©2004 Imported by Diageo North America, Inc., Stamford, CT

THE
NEW YORKER
ONLINE

newyorker.com

THIS WEEK'S
WEB EXCLUSIVE

Jerome Groopman talks about why prescription drugs can be dangerous for children.

An archive of hundreds of past Web exclusives, including Q. & A.s, cover galleries, slide shows, Web sightings, and more.

A decade of New Yorker Film Notes.

A calendar of New Yorker events across the country.

DANCE

NEW YORK CITY BALLET
The highlight of the first week of the winter repertory season is a new production of Peter Martins's 2000 ballet "Todo Buenos Aires," set to a fresh arrangement of tangos by Astor Piazzolla and featuring the guest artist Julio Bocca. ♦ Jan. 4 at 7:30: "Divertimento No. 15," "The Four Temperaments," and "Cortège Hongrois." ♦ Jan. 5 at 8: "Ballo Della Regina," "Stabat Mater," and "Cortège Hongrois." ♦ Jan. 6 at 8: "Divertimento No. 15," "Polyphonia," and "Musagète." ♦ Jan. 7 at 8: "Ballo Della Regina," "Stabat Mater," and "I'm Old Fashioned." ♦ Jan. 8 at 2: "Ballo Della Regina," "The Four Temperaments," and "Musagète." ♦ Jan. 8 at 8: "The Four Temperaments," "Todo Buenos Aires," and "I'm Old Fashioned." ♦ Jan. 9 at 3: "Square Dance," "Polyphonia," and "Musagète." ♦ Jan. 11 at 7:30: "Ballo Della Regina," "Todo Buenos Aires," and "Musagète." (New York State Theatre, Lincoln Center. 212-870-5570. Through Feb. 27.)

"CLASSICAL SAVION"
In his season at the Joyce a year ago, Savion Glover was full of surprises. Usually introverted, he let loose his charm and found a natural, uningratiating way to share his joy in tap dancing. He even sang a little. Returning to the Chelsea theatre for three more weeks, Glover finds a new way to freshen his art, dancing solo to music by Stravinsky, Bach, and other classical composers, performed live by a chamber ensemble. (175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. Jan. 4 at 8. Through Jan. 23.)

WALLY CARDONA QUARTET
For the new "Him, There, Them," Cardona has created a geometric world: white cubes divided into white rectangles and vivid-green squares of grass. The dancers who inhabit this alien setting seem both artificial and real, maintaining a smoothness of motion, sensual yet sterile, that conceals underlying tension. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 212-924-0077. Jan. 10 at 8 and Jan. 11 and Jan. 13-15 at 7:30.)

EIGHTH ANNUAL JAPANESE CONTEMPORARY DANCE SHOWCASE
You can count on the Japan Society's annual sampler for idiosyncrasy. Making its U.S. début is the all-female Sennichimae Blue Sky Dance Club, which infuses Butoh techniques with an infantilized pop sensibility that's unmistakably Japanese. Most of the other groups are Western in mood: the members of Batik thrash spastically and stick their hands down their pants, Monochrome Circus does European-style contact improv, and the new company Noism05, led by Jo Kanamori, shows the influence of Maurice Béjart and Jirí Kylián. But the standout performance is a conventional piece by Kaiji Moriyama, in which the soloist displays sinuous grace and brilliant technique. (333 E. 47th St. 212-752-3015. Jan. 7-8 at 7:30.)

DANCE ON CAMERA FESTIVAL
This year's festival emphasizes the communicative powers of dance, in a program that includes the 1952 documentary "The Gods of Bali," about trance dances in that country; "Short Stories from Around the World" (eight film shorts set in Italy, the United Kingdom, Australia, and elsewhere); and Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger's exquisitely filmed 1948 dance drama, "The Red Shoes," starring Moira Shearer. (Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center. 212-875-5600. For a complete schedule, visit www.filmlinc.com. Starts Jan. 7. Through Jan. 22.)

"THE MODESTY OF ICEBERGS"
The four men in Daniel Léveillé's hour-long new work wear no clothes, but their dance is not erotic. In their methodical balances and jumps, they resemble gymnasts, not strippers. And when they squat, backs to the audience, or lie supine and spread-legged, they radiate a sober detachment. A naked woman who enters the mix is treated no differently, and a Chopin piano accompaniment lends the work a wistful tinge. (Danspace Project at St. Mark's In-the-Bowery, Second Ave. at 10th St. 212-674-8194. Jan. 6-9 at 8:30.)

"SCREAMING SHRUBBERY"
Third Rail Dance's pastiche of murder and jazz is like a round of Clue deconstructed by acerbic drama students. A French maid lasciviously twirls a feather duster, midgets hide under a baroness's cape, a shrubbery comes to life, and a pale heroine performs a duet with an axe. A spastic butler narrates the action, and dancers speak lines and sing original songs by Russ Kaplan. (Merce Cunningham Studio, 55 Bethune St. For more information, call 718-871-3932. Jan. 7 at 9, Jan. 8 at 8 and 10, and Jan. 9 at 8.)

NIGHT LIFE
CONCERTS

"AMERICAN SONGBOOK"
Audra McDonald has a mammoth vocal and stage presence that's bolstered by an expansive embrace of our nation's songs. (Rose Theatre, Broadway at 60th St. 212-721-6500. Jan. 6-8 at 8.)

GEORGE CLINTON AND THE P-FUNK ALL-STARS
Clinton is well into his sixties, but he's still dropping the funk with flamboyant aplomb. With the help of an expert band that includes the keyboard wizard Bernie Worrell, he'll be revisiting favorites from the seventies and dispensing aphorisms: "Free your mind and your ass will follow" and so forth. The local maverick post-rock alchemists TV on the Radio are the opening act. (Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave. 718-636-4100. Jan. 7 at 7:30.)

GLOBALFEST
Musicians from five continents descend upon the Public Theatre (see This Week). (425 Lafayette St. 212-239-6200. Jan. 8 at 7:30.)

"50 YEARS AND 10 NIGHTS"
Not every musician can celebrate a half century of work at the age of fifty-six, but the saxophone and

TABLES FOR TWO

TEMPO
256 Fifth Ave., Brooklyn (718-636-2020)—The new Brooklyn dining scene can get old pretty fast, with all those crowded communal tables and artfully dishevelled former bodegas. Cucina—the progenitor of Park Slope's restaurant row—has reopened with a new name and new Manhattan partners (ex-Babbo front-of-the-house types). It might be the twenty-foot-tall curving walls, the canvases brushed with metallic paint, or the eerie absence of kids, but it hardly feels like the Slope.

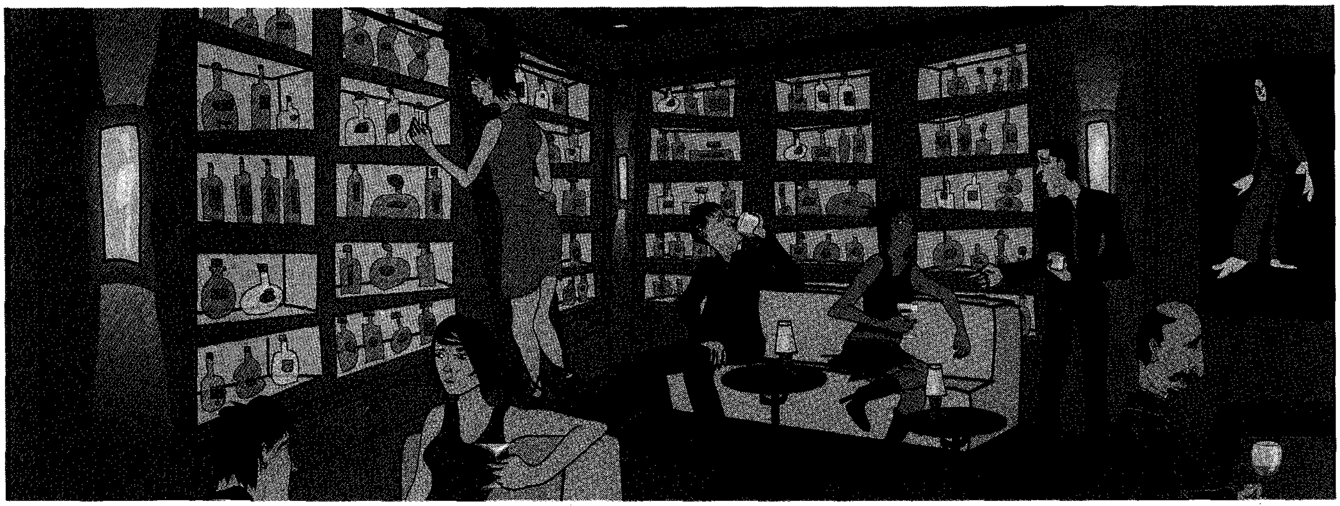
The food is also new, and it's not just Italian anymore. Chef and part owner Michael Fiore, a holdover from Cucina, has managed to wind together flavors and styles from all over the Mediterranean without creating a disconnected smorgasbord. The appetizers are full of grace notes: fennel-and-pistachio stuffing in the house-made *porchetta*, toasted almonds in the flaky phyllo duck rolls. The braised-lamb-shank entrée comes with a horseradish *gremolata*, a nod to Cucina's famous osso buco, but it also makes use of Tunisian *harissa* and *merguez*. Other standouts are the sautéed skate with *beurre noisette* and raisins, and fresh bucatini coated in a bright pistachio pesto.

The disparate ingredients are well matched by an eclectic wine list, and the clean-cut servers, who appear recruited from business school instead of art school, have a thorough knowledge of both. Tempo does have its little pretensions, like serving its wine by the miniature carafe, or *quartino*, rather than by the glass. Still, it's a surprise to find that the rates are so reasonable—for the elbow room alone, they probably could have imported Manhattan prices. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays for dinner. Entrées $10-$27.)

—*Owen Phillips*

clarinet virtuoso Paquito D'Rivera rose from child prodigy to a fixture on the jazz, Latin-jazz, and classical-crossover scenes. Such associates as the pianists Bebo Valdés and Michel Camilo, the bassist Israel (Cachao) Lopez, the cellist Yo-Yo Ma, the singer Rosa Passos, and the percussionist Candido join him in celebrating. (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. Jan. 10 at 8.)

TONY TRISCHKA
One of the world's finest banjo players, backed by an acoustic quartet, presents a program that traces the banjo's history, from its origins in Africa to the present day. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 212-501-3330. Jan. 11 at 8.)



At the Brandy Library, in Tribeca, a stylish crowd stays up late studying their Cognacs, Armagnacs, Calvados, and each other.

MAXIMILIAN BODE

CLUBS

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
237 W. 42nd St. (212-997-4144)—Jan. 6: **Was (Not Was)**, the eccentric dance-pop outfit anchored by Don Was (né Donald Fagenson) and David Was (né David Weiss), was famous for a skewed sensibility and a penchant for odd cameos (the band recruited the likes of Mel Tormé and Ozzy Osbourne to provide vocals). However, Don Was went on to a lucrative career as a producer, and Was (Not Was) was not, at least for a while. Jan. 8-9: The Springsteen cronies **Southside Johnny & the Asbury Jukes.** Jan. 11: As life gets faster, **B. B. King** continues to take it slow. His guitar playing has evolved into a ritual, each note massaged into an ecstatic sheen.

BRANDY LIBRARY
25 N. Moore St., at Varick St. (212-226-5545)—More often than not, bottles of liquor are kept behind the bar and at a distance from patrons. Not so at this newly opened outpost of after-dinner culture, where softly lit single-malt Scotches, amber Cognacs and Armagnacs, and glistening Calvados are lined up on shelves along each wall, just begging to be touched. And, like books in a library, hundreds of bottles are there to be sampled and perused at will. The intimate room has elegant round wood tables and soft leather chairs, the music is strictly twentieth-century jazz (the pianist Joel Forrester is at the upright on Monday nights), and there are high-end bar snacks available. It's a space designed for lingering; the owner, Flavien Desoblin, a native Burgundian, says he'll often sniff a glass of Armagnac twenty times before taking the first sip.

IRVING PLAZA
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (212-777-6800)—Jan. 9: Part desecration, part homage, and all shtick, **Me First and the Gimme Gimmes** give contemporary and classic pop standards a high-energy pop-punk treatment. Their repertoire includes tender John Denver songs, hallowed Styx epics, and weepy Tammy Wynette ballads. Resplendent in willfully cheesy matching suits, the Gimmes set their amplifiers on stun and deliver pogo-friendly chaos.

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—Jan. 5: **Amos Lee** is a polite up-and-coming singer-songwriter who looks a bit like a young Bob Dylan and sounds at times like Otis Redding in his prime. Jan. 10: The rambling warbler **Michelle Shocked.**

LIVING ROOM
154 Ludlow St. (212-533-7235)—Jan. 7: The **Steep Canyon Rangers**, rising heartthrobs on the North Carolina bluegrass scene. Jan. 9: The exceptional Cuban guitarist and singer **Juan-Carlos Formell** doesn't rest on the glory of his family's heritage. The son of Los Van Van's leader, Juan Formell (and the grandson of the legendary arranger Francisco Formell), Juan-Carlos moved to New York a decade ago, and he's been reinvigorating traditional Cuban music with all his heart.

SATALLA
37 W. 26th St. (212-576-1155)—Jan. 7: **Juan-Carlos Formell** (see the Living Room). Jan. 8: **Geno Delafose**, the son of the legendary accordionist John Delafose, started out in his dad's ensemble, the Eunice Playboys, when he was still in elementary school. Over the following two decades, he picked up both the piano-key and the button accordions. He appears here with his French Rockin' Boogie Band for a night of dancing, southwestern-Louisiana style. Jan. 10: The blues guitarist **Eric Bibb**, Scotland's **Battlefield Band**, and **Balfa Toujours**, which is led by a daughter of the great fiddler Dewey Balfa, team up for a night of sterling acoustic music.

SOUTHPAW
125 Fifth Ave., Park Slope, Brooklyn (718-230-0236)—Jan. 7: **Keren Ann**, an Israeli-born singer-songwriter now based in France, sings intimate ballads and caresses her acoustic guitar with Continental discretion.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

ALGONQUIN HOTEL
59 W. 44th St. (212-840-6800)—Through Jan. 15: **Sylvia McNair.** The opera singer returns to the Oak Room for a program of Rodgers, Sondheim, and Arlen.

BIRDLAND
315 W. 44th St. (212-581-3080)—Through Jan. 8: Although **Jack DeJohnette** has played with heavies from Miles Davis to Bill Evans to Keith Jarrett (his current employer), he has never been content just being an A-list drummer for hire. With his own bands he gets to enjoy his uncommon original tunes and call on edgy soloists. For this engagement, he débuts a promising new unit with the pianist **Danilo Perez**, the bassist **John Patitucci**, and the guitarist **Jerome Harris.**

DIZZY'S CLUB COCA-COLA
Broadway at 60th St. (212-258-9595)—Through Jan. 9: The **Eric Reed** trio. Reed, a talented and historically informed pianist, got his start with Wynton Marsalis, but he's found an identity and a following beyond the shadow of his old boss.

IRIDIUM
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (212-582-2121)—Jan. 5-9: The trumpeter **Terence Blanchard** may be best known as the composer for Spike Lee's films, but he remains an agile post-bop soloist whose commanding tone determines the mood of his tensile bands. Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.** The **Mingus Big Band** is here on Tuesdays.

LE JAZZ AU BAR
41 E. 58th St. (212-308-9455)—Through Jan. 9: Illness kept the vocal legend **Shirley Horn** from accompanying herself on the piano at shows earlier this year, but she's feeling better and will be back at the keyboards. She's a minimalist of awesome power who can still flatten an audience with the merest whisper.

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (212-576-2232)—Jan. 7-9: The singer **Stacey Kent** has a stunning tone and subtle phrasing that rejuvenate even the oldest standards.

KNITTING FACTORY
74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (212-219-3055)—Jan. 9: This Tribeca club hasn't been a jazz haven for quite a while now, but it is making up for the recent neglect with its Winter Jazzfest, featuring the **Bad Plus, Dave Douglas,** the **James Carter Organ Trio,** and others.

TONIC
107 Norfolk St. (212-358-7503)—Jan. 8-9: **Han Bennick** and friends. Mixing madcap sensibilities with exacting technique, the drummer Bennick has been a linchpin of the Dutch improvising scene since the sixties. Jan. 10-11: The bassist **Christian McBride** throws it down with **DJ Logic** and the guitarists **Charlie Hunter** and **Eric Krazno.**

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—Through Jan. 9: **Jeff (Tain) Watts** is a drummer who answers to an extroverted muse. He's played with both Wynton and Branford Marsalis and continues to be the most in-demand percussionist of his generation. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-879-5500)—A remarkable roomful of paintings depicting an iconic George Washington dominates the show **"Gilbert Stuart."** Staring from the walls like eighteenth-century premonitions of photographic reproduction are multi-

ple copies of Stuart's three famous Presidential portraits. All of Stuart's sitters are given a highly detailed treatment, from the lace-frilled ladies and their florid, bewigged husbands to John Adams, twinkly and irascible at eighty-nine, and even the chagrined-looking dog who posed with the Duke of Northumberland's children. Through Jan. 16. ♦ **"Wild: Fashion Untamed."** Through March 13. ♦ **"William Kentridge,"** an exhibition of film, etchings, and drawings by the South African artist. Through April 10. ♦ **"Princely Splendor: The Dresden Court, 1580-1620."** Through Jan. 30. ♦ Coincident with the Whitney's retrospective, the Met showcases a choice handful of works from its permanent collection in **"Romare Bearden at the Met."** Through March 6. ♦ A wealth of art and artifacts recovered from the tombs of ancient luminaries is on view in **"China: Dawn of a Golden Age, 200-750 A.D."** Through Jan. 23. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9400)—The museum has reopened in its renovated and enlarged home and is presenting a series of exhibits related to its metamorphosis. ♦ **"Yoshio Taniguchi: Nine Museums"** celebrates the architect and his previous art-housing projects, of which the new Modern is the first outside Japan. Through Jan. 31. ♦ **"Projects 82: Mark Dion—Rescue Archaeology."** Dion excavated traces of former Rockefeller town houses and the old Dorset Hotel from beneath the sculpture garden for this site-specific project. Through March 14. ♦ **"Michael Wesely: Open Shutter at the Museum of Modern Art."** The German photographer turned his long exposure method (he has left the shutter open for as long as three years) on MOMA while it was under construction. Through mid-2005. (Open Wednesdays through Mondays, 10:30 to 5:30, and Fridays, 10:30 to 8.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—**"The Aztec Empire"** lines the Guggenheim's spiral with more than four hundred artifacts, from carvings depicting harvest work to implements for human sacrifice. Through Feb. 13. ♦ The seven works on view in **"Recent Acquisitions: Contemporary Sculpture"** share a theme of whimsical theatricality. There's Robert Gober's Freudian fantasy of a big silver pipe threading through a laundry basket, and the towering cedar cabinet of tiny, empty drawers built by the Cuban collective Los Carpinteros in the form of Havana's Russian embassy. Kudos, too, to the bold curator who emptied an entire gallery in order to properly isolate Maurizio Cattelan's self-portrait as a doll hanging from a Marcel Breuer coatrack. With contributions by Tim Noble and Sue Webster, Christo and Jeanne-Claude, Manfred Pernice, and Tom Friedman. Through Jan. 27. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART

Madison Ave. at 75th St. (212-570-3676)—Grandiose title aside, **"Political Nature"**—a modest gathering of prints and drawings by Walton Ford, Trenton Doyle Hancock, Frank Moore, and Stephanie Syjuco—is full of small delights. Ford's loving parodies of Audubon prints present gorgeously plumed fowl scribbled over with enigmatic or scurrilous captions; Moore and Hancock take on the anthropomorphic animals beloved of political cartoons and children's stories. Best are Syjuco's clever simulations of nineteenth-century naturalists' illustrations, which detail the species variations of computer plugs, ports, and connectors. Through March 27. ♦ **"Isamu Noguchi: Master Sculptor."** Through Jan. 16. ♦ **"James Lee Byars: The Perfect Silence."** A presentation of the artist's drawings, sculptures, and installations. Through March 6. ♦ The city's museums are full of Romare Bearden's work right now, but **"The Art of Romare Bearden"** is the biggest and most thorough show. Through Jan. 9. ♦ **"Bill Viola: Five Angels for the Millennium."** A large-scale video installation made in 2001. Through March 6. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 1 to 9.)

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

Central Park W. at 79th St. (212-769-5100)—This is the last week to see **"Frogs: A Chorus of Colors,"** which presents some two hundred frogs in glass-walled habitats. Stars include the saucer-size African bullfrogs, who have been wrangling with the frog keepers for control of the tongs that are used to feed them frozen mice, and the Chinese gliding frogs, whose toe webbing spreads wide enough to allow them to hang-glide. The centerpiece of the show is a large vivarium filled with seventy-five dart-poison frogs; cameras inside the glass walls can be swivelled, zoomed, and focussed with a pair of joysticks to get a closer look at the jewel-bright hoppers. Through Jan. 9. ♦ **"Totems to Turquoise: Native North American Jewelry Arts of the Northwest and Southwest."** Through July 10. ♦ **"The Butterfly Conservatory: Tropical Butterflies Alive in Winter."** Through May 30. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART

200 Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—**"Great Expectations: John Singer Sargent Painting Children."** Included here are scenes of beaches and birthday parties and portraits of rich society kids and the progeny of Sargent's artistic peers. The children's luminous beauty is made poignant by wall texts describing what became of them amid the next century's wars and upheaval. Through Jan. 16. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5, and Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

FRICK COLLECTION

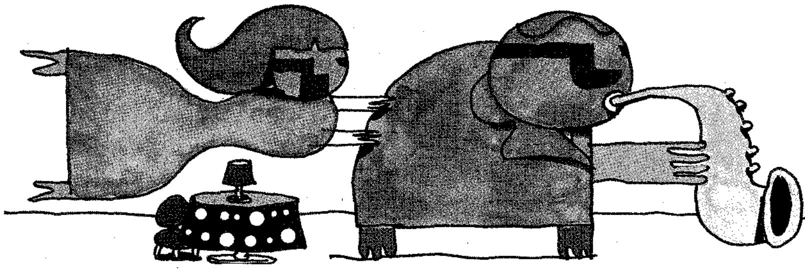
1 E. 70th St. (212-288-0700)—Raphael's lush and enigmatic nude portrait, **"La Fornarina,"** is visiting the United States for the first time ever. Through Jan. 30. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6, and Sundays, 1 to 6.)

MUSEO DEL BARRIO

Fifth Ave. at 104th St. (212-831-7272)—The selection in **"Retratos: 2,000 Years of Latin American Portraits"** rambles from head-shaped vessels from fourth-century Peru to Diego Rivera's 1946 painting of a Mexican movie star. Also present are the oldest signed portrait in South America ("The Mulattoes of Esmeraldas," 1599), paintings of young nuns on their "coronation" day, and Frida Kahlo's "Self-Portrait with Thorn Necklace and Hummingbird." Contemporary art gets short shrift, but there are three wonderful examples: Vik Muniz's portraits of sugar workers' children in St. Kitts, drawn in sugar and photographed; Iñigo Manglano-Ovalle's "portraits" based on DNA analysis; and Oscar Muñoz's poetic "Breath," steel disks featuring photos from the obituary section of Colombian newspapers that can only be seen when you step close and breathe on them. Through March 20. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 11 to 5, and Thursday evenings until 8.)

JAZZ NOTES

Our favorite jazz albums of 2004, listed alphabetically.



DAVID MILLER

Bill Charlap, "Somewhere: The Songs of Leonard Bernstein" (Blue Note)—The pianist Charlap's concept record finds gold in such classics as "Some Other Time" and "America," as well as in overlooked charmers like "Big Stuff" and "Ohio," both taken at a delicious leisurely tempo. The agility of two unrelated Washingtons, the bassist Peter and the drummer Kenny, underscores Charlap's transformations beautifully.

Alice Coltrane, "Translinear Light" (Impulse!)—Coltrane returns to jazz recording for the first time in twenty-six years, with the help of her son Ravi. The blend of spirituality and modal improvising recalls her earlier work, as well as that of her late husband, but the undiminished brio that Coltrane brings to the keyboard, particularly her electric-organ work, lends vitality to a truly unexpected album.

Von Freeman, "The Great Divide" (Premonition)—The eighty-two-year-old saxophonist is more assured, inventive, and downright daring than scores of young tenor players. He plays fast and loose with tone, pitch, and time, injecting avant-garde strains into mainstream material with offhand insouciance. Of special note is the majestic unaccompanied seven-minute rhapsody, "Violets for Your Furs."

Fred Hersch, "The Fred Hersch Trio + 2" (Palmetto)—The pianist Hersch transforms his trio into a marvellous quintet with the addition of the saxophonist Tony Malaby and the trumpeter Ralph Alessi. Hersch writes lean and sharp tunes, and the horns add flesh and color to standouts like "A Riddle Song," "Black Dog Pays a Visit," and "A Lark."

Soweto Kinch, "Conversations with the Unseen" (Dune)—This British saxophonist raps in a charmingly Anglo fashion, but that's the least interesting element of a powerful début recording that's full of straight-ahead swing. Kinch's fluent alto playing grabs most of the attention, and his quartet has a spacious ensemble sound.

Charles Lloyd and Billy Higgins, "Which Way Is East" (ECM)—Just before he died, in 2001, the master drummer Billy Higgins sat down with his old friend the saxophonist Charles Lloyd to make some feel-good music. In their case, this meant drawing on free jazz, samba, religious song, blues, and exotica.

Joe Lovano, "I'm All for You" (Blue Note)—For this program of sumptuous ballads and mid-tempo performances, the saxophonist Lovano enlists the pianist Hank Jones, an octogenarian still playing with undiminished skill, who turns in one memorable solo after another. The drummer Paul Motian and the bassist George Mraz are the perfect support team.

Mylab, "Mylab" (Terminus)—The keyboardist Wayne Horvitz and the percussionist Tucker Martine join a host of musician friends and stir up a mess of sounds. You can occasionally make out the individual contributions of such stellar guests as Bill Frisell, Bobby Previte, and Robin Holcomb, but isolating parts from the whole misses the point. It may not all be jazz, but it is all strangely absorbing.

David Sánchez, "Coral" (Sony)—Recording with an orchestra can be dangerous for a horn soloist, but the tenor saxophonist Sánchez, who made this album with the City of Prague Philharmonic, never loses himself in Carlos Franzetti's arrangements. He's perfectly in synch with the sweeping melodic beauty of "Eu Sei Que Vou Te Amar," "Vidala," and other compositions that deserve higher visibility in jazz circles.

Nancy Wilson, "RSVP (Rare Songs, Very Personal)" (MCG Jazz)—Wilson has slipped in and out of the jazz world for most of her four-decade career, but the lady has never forgotten how to swing. The jazz quotient is higher than usual here (guests include Phil Woods, George Shearing, and Gary Burton), and on Duke Ellington's "I Let a Song Go Out of My Heart" and other up-tempo numbers Wilson still kicks high.

NEUE GALERIE
1048 Fifth Ave., at 86th St. (212-628-6200)—**"Comic Grotesque: Wit and Mockery in German Art, 1870-1940,"** a succinct, scholarly show, is a crash course in names both big—Böcklin, Kubin, Klinger, Nolde, Grosz, Feininger, Höch, Heartfield—and little (the performer and filmmaker Karl Valentin is a real find) who infused Germanic avant-gardism with sometimes hilarious, always obstreperous ill temper. Through Feb. 14. (Open Fridays, 11 to 9, and Saturdays through Mondays, 11 to 6.)

NEW MUSEUM
Temporarily located in the Chelsea Museum, 556 W. 22nd St. (212-219-1222)—**"East Village USA."** Through March 19. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, noon to 6, and Thursday evenings until 8.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.

MILTON AVERY
Avery was often cited as a crucial influence on later abstraction, particularly Rothko, Newman, and Gottlieb, and one can see why in this these seascapes. The canvases, mostly views of Gloucester, Massachusetts, and Pemaquid Point, Maine, are broken into fields of undulating color representing, vaguely, land and sea and sky. A few look shockingly pastel, like premonitions of Hockney. Sketchbooks opened to pages that served as studies for works provide a nice accompaniment. Through Jan. 29. (Knoedler, 19 E. 70th St. 212-794-0550.)

ANTOINE VOLLON
The nineteenth century looks like a strange place in Vollon's paintings "A Monkey Frying Eggs" and "Mound of Butter"—or perhaps just a less cholesterol-obsessed one. Elsewhere, this near-contemporary of Courbet adopts the naturalism of mid-century French painting, Chardin, and the Dutch masters with sweeping but simple views of Dieppe, Bessancourt, and the familiar bridges and boulevards of Paris. Although he lived through the Impressionist juggernaut, Vollon (1833-1900) remained a committed realist, painting landscapes, traditional still-lifes with produce and dead game animals, and portraits of unidentified working folk, all in generous brushstrokes with thickly impastoed surfaces. Through Jan. 7. (Wildenstein, 19 E. 64th St. 212-879-0500.)

Short List

JOHN BALDESSARI
Marian Goodman, 24 W. 57th St.
212-977-7160. Through Jan. 8.

A. R. PENCK
Werner, 4 E. 77th St. 212-988-1623.
Through Jan. 20.

STUART SHILS
De Nagy, 724 Fifth Ave. 212-262-5050.
Through Jan. 8.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

EBERHARD HAVEKOST
A painter who follows in the footsteps of Gerhard Richter and Luc Tuymans, tweaking at the cozy relationship between painting and photographs. Havekost's subjects are considerably quirkier, though—especially now that he's moved away from stark architectural scenes to pictures of hooded figures, a scarred soldier, and people climbing stone walls; goofy Spider-Man portraits; and a series called "Rusty Landscapes," featuring abandoned sheds and empty garages. Like a collection of found snapshots, Havekost's images offer a haphazard, eclectic view of the world. Rather than ordering things to make sense, he's intent on perplexing us further. Through Jan. 15. (Kern, 532 W. 20th St. 212-367-9663.)

LAWRENCE SEWARD
Paintings of Pacific Ocean views, framed by the concrete structure of highway overpasses. This is

DREAM LONGER. PLAY LONGER.
RELAX LONGER.

$200* resort credit per room based on stays of 3-4 nights

$400* resort credit per room based on stays of 5-7 nights

$600* resort credit per room based on stays of 8+ nights

THE BREAKERS®
PALM BEACH

For reservations or information, call your travel professional, contact The Breakers directly at 1-888-BREAKERS (273-2537), or reserve online at thebreakers.com.

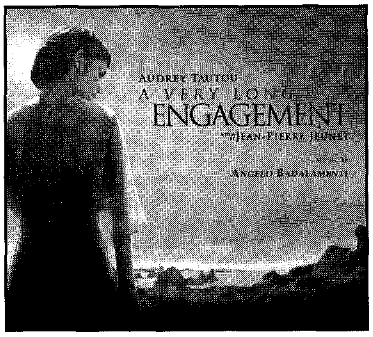
Five Diamond Award AAA

* Offer valid January 4 - May 7, 2005. Resort credit is per room, per stay, applicable to all guest room and suite accommodations. Rates starting at $399 for a Standard Superior Room, single or double occupancy, subject to availability. Excludes taxes and gratuities. Credit not valid toward daily room rate, scuba diving, snorkeling, baby-sitting, sports lessons, purchases at Giorgio's or in conjunction with any other offer. Credit is non-refundable upon check-out. Not available to groups. Blackout dates apply from February 17-21, 2005, and March 18-April 2, 2005. Other restrictions apply.

The Leading Hotels of the World

Words on Music

Borders' music expert Brian McClemens says:
"The romance and mystery of this visually sumptuous French tale, told amid scenes of the trenches in World War I, are echoed in a lush orchestral soundtrack by Badalamenti of *Twin Peaks* fame."



N NONESUCH

A Very Long Engagement, Jean-Pierre Jeunet's first film since *Amelie* features a score by Grammy-winning composer Angelo Badalamenti.

"Rapturously beautiful, startlingly audacious and often very funny...it will make you feel deeply about love and war."
– *The Wall Street Journal*

"So very engaging you'll wish it were longer." – *NPR*

BORDERS®
books music movies cafe

the unbeautiful version of a vision employed by everyone from Caspar David Friedrich to Hiroshi Sugimoto—the horizon that triggers a sense of the sublime. Seward's sublime is considerably more downtrodden, though, with its thick industrial piers covered in graffiti, craggy coastlines scattered with litter, and detritus hanging down from unseen guardrails overhead. Through Jan. 22. (Kreps, 516A W. 20th St. 212-741-8849.)

GABRIEL VORMSTEIN
Vormstein glues together pages from the financial section of *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* to make an easel-size surface for painting. Some of these panels are covered over with watercolor or gouache and turned into Constructivist-style abstractions. Wires extending from two works recall Rodchenko's corner-installed "Counter Reliefs," strengthening the Russian-Constructivist allusion. Elsewhere, Vormstein breaks into Expressionism in the vein of Schiele or Klimt. One work, titled "Failure Has a Fragrance," places delicate watercolor flowers over a news story featuring an image of David's starkly neoclassic "Oath of the Horatii." Through Jan. 8. (Kaplan, 416 W. 14th St. 212-645-7335.)

"REALM OF THE SENSES"
Art that engages the eyes—and ears, nose, tongue, and brain. A signature Felix Gonzalez-Torres sculpture consists of fifty pounds of wrapped hard candy arranged in a rectangle on the floor; the smell of eucalyptus wafts from a heated pot in Bill Viola's Zen video installation "Il Vapore." Artists use their own senses in works like Janine Antoni's "Lick and Lather," portrait figurines made out of licked chocolate and soap, Vito Acconci's black-and-white performance photos of self-administered bites ("Trademarks"), and a video of Patty Chang with eels squirming restlessly inside her shirt. Through Jan. 22. (Cohan, 533 W. 26th St. 212-714-9500.)

Short List

THOMAS ASHCRAFT / TINA GIROUARD
Cue, 511 W. 25th St. 212-206-3583.
Through Jan. 29.

ROZ CHAST
Saul, 535 W. 22nd St. 212-627-2410.
Through Jan. 29.

MARTHA ROSLER
Gorney, Bravin, and Lee, 534 W. 26th St.
212-352-8372. Through Jan. 8.

ROBERT RYMAN
Pace Wildenstein, 534 W. 25th St.
212-421-3292. Through Jan. 8.

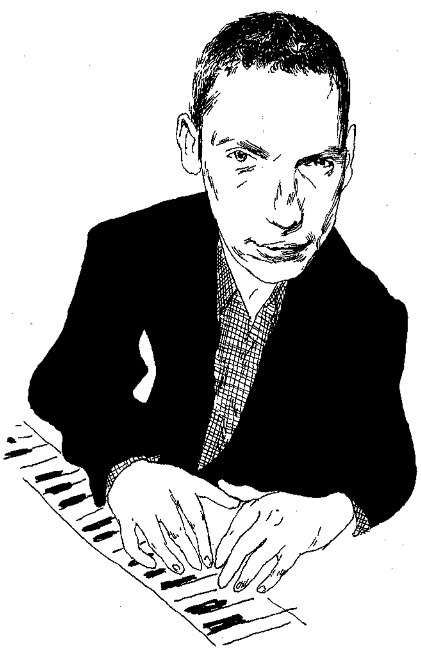
PHOTOGRAPHY

THOMAS ALLEN
Pop-up art ascends to sublime heights in these twenty-by-twenty-four-inch chromogenic prints of constructions made from old books. Why not view the books themselves? Because here the artist controls the lighting, perspective, and focus to create multidimensional scenes rich in detail. In "Swell," a ship with numbered sails rides the wave of the unabridged dictionary it was clipped from. In "Thirst," a femme fatale holds a glass out from her cover, to be filled by a rogue from a neighboring volume. Through Feb. 5. (Foley, 547 W. 27th St. 212-244-9081.)

ROSWELL ANGIER
Expect to be moved, not titillated, by these sixteen vintage black-and-white prints from the mid-nineteen-seventies of strippers in Boston's red-light district. The photographer, born in 1940, knew his subjects and documented them as a young man in his book " '. . . A Kind of Life': Conversations in the Combat Zone." Angier's portraits of the denizens of such places as the Two O'Clock Club and the Mousetrap Cabaret are deeply humane, giving these objects of voyeurism a chance to look back at you. Also on view are eleven black-and-white prints, dating from 1978 to 1982, documenting the lives of Native Americans in New Mexico and Arizona. Through Jan. 29. (Gitterman, 179 E. 75th St. 212-734-0868.)

ANDERS PETERSEN
Stark and grainy black-and-white images by a Swedish photographer. A series of small prints show people in a mental institution—a Patti Smith look-alike pulls her hair, a man lies on his bed flicking ashes on the sheet. A more recent body of work, more diaristic in subject matter, is seemingly haphazardly hung, with some prints so high on the wall that they are difficult to see. These pictures recall Nan Goldin's use of family and friends, but the high-contrast images are harsher and colder, while still feeling intimate and personal. The gallery's back room is hung with prints from the sixties and seventies made in a seedy Hamburg bar; the patrons seem to be having the time of their lives even when they're about to punch each other in the face. Through Jan. 31. (Marvelli, 526 W. 26th St. 212-627-3363.)

INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY
Three important photographers, Bill Owens, Ralph Eugene Meatyard, and E. J. Bellocq, provide a primer of sorts on twentieth-century American portraiture. Meatyard, an optician by trade who was from Lexington, Kentucky, died young in 1972, at the height of his powers. He took eerie, surrealistic pictures of his friends and family, often posed wearing plastic masks. This is the largest show of the photographer's work ever seen in New York, with a hundred and fifty images that span his too short career. Bellocq photographed prostitutes in their rooms around 1912 in a straightforward, respectful way. The work was forgotten until Lee Friedlander discovered Bellocq's glass negatives in a New Orleans antique shop. I.C.P. has a selection of Friedlander's prints, shown at MOMA in 1970, and recently discovered vintage prints. Bill Owens's book "Suburbia" made him an instant star when it was published in 1972. His pictures of young families in their new tract homes in Livermore, California, spoke to Western migration, consumer culture, and shifting cultural mores. These equally canny pictures, entitled "Leisure," were taken about ten years later, just before Owens quit photography and opened a microbrewery. Through Feb. 27. (1133 Sixth Ave. 212-857-0045.)



Daniel Gortler plays music by Mendelssohn on January 9.

ANDY FRIEDMAN

Short List

BILL BRANDT
Houk, 745 Fifth Ave. 212-750-7070.
Through Jan. 8.

BEATE GÜTSCHOW
Danziger, 521 W. 26th St. 212-629-6778.
Through Jan. 15.

CLASSICAL MUSIC
OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA
Jan. 5 at 7:30 and Jan. 8 at 1:30: After years of problems, Ben Heppner's voice has finally returned to its full power; he sings the title role of **"Otello"** with a lyrical, preternatural ease that belies the difficulty of the most challenging tenor role in all of Italian opera. Barbara Frittoli is his Desdemona, with Carlo Guelfi singing Iago; James Levine conducts. (These are the final performances.) ♦ Jan. 6 at 7:30: Stephen Wadsworth's production of **"Rodelinda,"** the first the Met has mounted, is a triumph for all concerned—not least for Handel, whose decorous world of da-capo arias and impossibly noble characters has rarely seemed more lively. Renée Fleming and David Daniels keep the trills and roulades going through to the end, with Stephanie Blythe, Bejun Mehta, Kobie van Rensburg, and John Relyea also contributing strong performances; the expert early-music conductor Harry Bicket, adding recorders, lutes, and harpsichord to the pit, lightens the Met Orchestra's sound and makes it dance. (This is the final performance.) ♦ Jan. 7 at 8: The robust American soprano Andrea Gruber takes the title role in the Zeffirelli production of **"Turandot,"** heading a cast that also includes Krassimira Stoyanova, Johan Botha (as Calâf), and Hao Jiang Tian; Bertrand de Billy conducts. ♦ Jan. 8 at 8: The final performance of Offenbach's **"Les Contes d'Hoffmann,"** with Ramón Vargas, Jennifer Welch-Babidge, Patricia Racette, Béatrice Uria-Monzon, Katharine Goeldner, Dean Peterson, and Jean-Paul Fouchécourt; Frédéric Chaslin. (Metropolitan Opera House. 212-362-6000. There are no further performances until Jan. 26.)

AMATO OPERA
If there's any opera that suits this company's intimate East Village theatre, it's **"La Bohème,"** complete with starving artists and boisterous city scenes. Anthony Amato, as always, directs the production. (Amato Opera Theatre, 319 Bowery, at 2nd St. 212-228-8200. Jan. 7-8 at 7:30 and Jan. 9 at 2:30. These are the final performances.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC
Daniele Gatti, the music director of London's Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, conducts a brawny program of music by Schumann, Bartók (the Second Piano Concerto, with Yefim Bronfman), and Brahms (the Fourth Symphony). (Jan. 6 at 7:30 and Jan. 7-8 at 8.) ♦ Gatti also conducts the Brahms on a Saturday-matinée concert that will begin with a chamber performance of Dvořák's String Quintet in E-Flat Major (featuring the violists Cynthia Phelps and Rebecca Young). (Jan. 8 at 2.) (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-875-5656.)

THE MET ORCHESTRA
James Levine conducts an ambitious program of music by Weber, Brahms (the Violin Concerto, with Gil Shaham), Varèse ("Amériques"), and Gershwin ("An American in Paris"). (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. Jan. 9 at 3.)

NORTH/SOUTH CHAMBER ORCHESTRA
Max Lifchitz's concert series, which celebrates the achievements of composers from all over the Western Hemisphere, begins the year with a program of works by Allan Crossman ("Flyer," with the cellist Wolfram Koessel), Harold Schiffman, Mary Jeanne van Appledorn, Ricardo Tacuchian, and Ernst Bacon ("The Breath of Life," one of the long-lived composer's final works, with Robert Sherman narrating). (Christ and St. Stephen's Church, 120 W. 69th St. Jan. 9 at 3. No tickets required.)

PHILADELPHIA ORCHESTRA
Christoph Eschenbach leads his magnificent ensemble in Mahler's Ninth Symphony. (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. Jan. 11 at 8.)

BACHANALIA: "RUSSIAN NEW YEAR"
J. S. Bach may be the guiding star of the violinist Nina Beilina's chamber orchestra, but the group's concerts have always had a pronounced Russian

accent—rarely more so than in their next concert, which will feature Bach's Sonata for Violin, Viola, and Organ, BWV 1037, along with a string-orchestra arrangement of Tchaikovsky's "Album for the Young" and a selection of Russian folk tunes for the New Year, played on the *domra* and the *bayan.* Robert Sherman hosts. (St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. Jan. 11 at 8. Tickets at the door.)

RECITALS

MIDTOWN CONCERTS
Galileo's Daughters—the soprano Sarah Pillow, the gamba player Mary Anne Ballard, and the harpsichordist Jennifer Peterson—perform a lunchtime "Concert Spirituel," which features works by Lully, Couperin, and Elizabeth Jacquet de la Guerre. (Church of St. Francis of Assisi, 135 W. 31st St. Jan. 5 at 1:15. No tickets required.)

BARGEMUSIC
Jan. 6-7 at 7:30: The cellist Inbal Segev and the pianist Benjamin Hochman perform a concert with a Jewish theme—music by Bloch ("From Jewish Life"), Ben-Haim, John Williams (the theme from "Schindler's List"), and Mendelssohn (the Cello Sonata No. 2 in D Major). ♦ Jan. 8 at 7:30 and Jan. 9 at 4: A pair of famous Bohemian trios (Smetana's, in G Minor, and Dvořák's "Dumky") highlight a program offered by Segev, the violinist Gil Morgenstern, and the pianist Reiko Uchida. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083.)

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM ARTISTS IN CONCERT
Mendelssohn's music for strings is the focus of this virtuosic young chamber band's programming this year, coördinated by the cellist Edward Arron. The violist Nicholas Cords and the *erhu* player Xu Ke are among the musicians joining him in a concert featuring Chen Yi's "Fiddle Suite," Haydn's String Trio in G Major, Op. 53, No. 1, and the Mendelssohn String Quintet in B-Flat Major, Op. 87. (Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 212-570-3949. Jan. 7 at 7.)

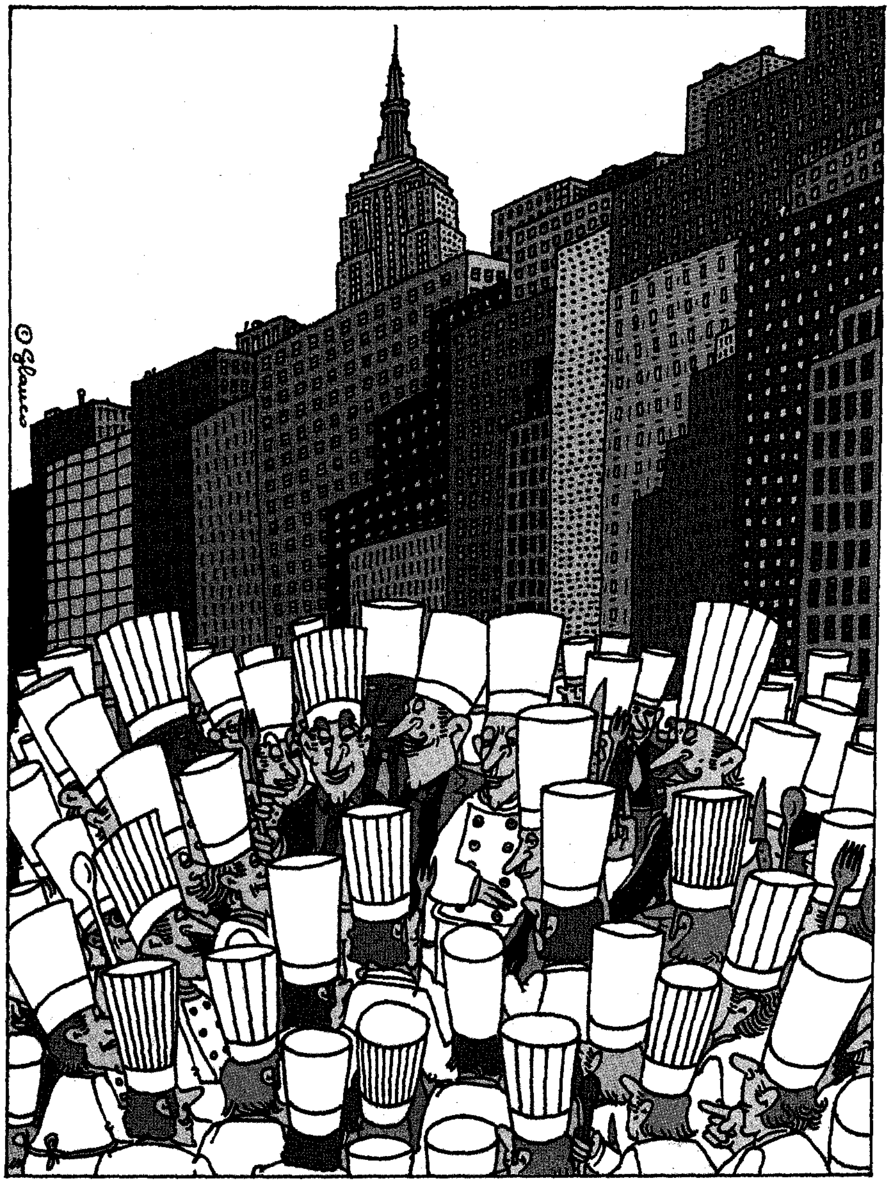
DICK HYMAN
The jazz pianist and composer joins some friends from the jazz and classical worlds—including the pianist Ruth Laredo and the bassist Greg Cohen—for an evening of improvisations on themes from the classical repertoire. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 212-415-5500. Jan. 8 at 8.)

DANIEL GORTLER
The young Israeli pianist brings his golden tone to a generous selection of Mendelssohn's "Songs Without Words." (Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center. 212-721-6500. Jan. 9 at 11 A.M.)

NEW YORK VIOLA SOCIETY
Steven Dann, the former principal violist of the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra and the Toronto Symphony, performs an all-Brahms concert with the pianist Lambert Orkis that includes both of the Viola Sonatas and the hauntingly beautiful Two Songs with Viola, Op. 91 (with the mezzo-soprano Susan Platts). (Manhattan School of Music, Broadway at 122nd St. 212-749-5272. Jan. 9 at 4.)

MUSIC FROM ASTON MAGNA
This distinguished early-music group, which makes its home in the Berkshires, likes to take highlights of its summer concerts on tour during the regular season. Four of its personnel, along with the clarinettist Eric Hoeprich, come to the Frick Collection (where the group gave its first New York performance, in 1974) to perform a string quartet by Onslow and the Clarinet Quintets by Mozart and Weber. (1 E. 70th St. Jan. 9 at 5. Remaining tickets, which are free, will be distributed at the door.)

TAKÁCS STRING QUARTET: "ULTIMATE BEETHOVEN"
The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center hosts a monthlong festival in which the Takács offers its finely detailed interpretations of all of Beethoven's string quartets. Founded by students in Hungary thirty years ago, the group is now in its prime; the players create a sound that is both elegantly burnished and densely concentrated—a steel fist in a velvet glove. Jan. 9 at 5: The Quartets in G Major, Op. 18, No. 2; in F Minor, Op. 95 ("Serioso"); and in B-Flat Major, Op. 130. ♦ Jan. 11 at 7:30: The Quartets in F Major, Op. 18, No. 1; in E-Flat Major, Op. 74 ("Harp"); and in C-Sharp Minor, Op. 131. (Alice Tully Hall. 212-875-5788. For a schedule of lectures and a master class, see www.chambermusicsociety.org.)



A handful of the city's top chefs talk about their work, at the 92nd Street Y.

GLAUCO DELLA SCIUCCA

JUPITER SYMPHONY CHAMBER PLAYERS
The soprano Christine Goerke and the harpsichordist Gerald Ranck are the special guests for a program of Baroque works by Locatelli, Stamitz, J. C. Bach, Marais, and Handel ("Agrippina condotta a morire"). (Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church, 152 W. 66th St. 212-799-1259. Jan. 10 at 2 and 7:30.)

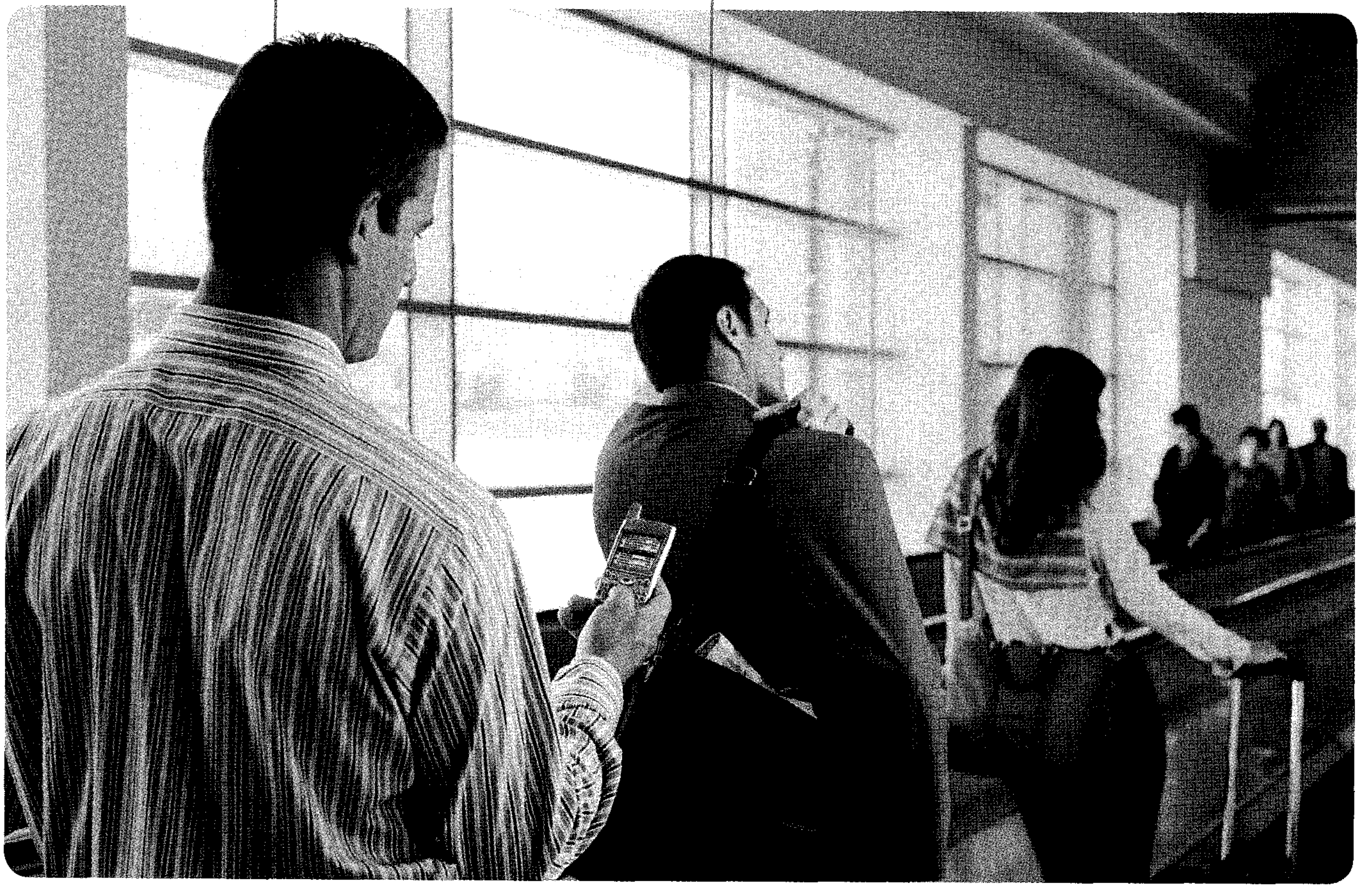
KURTÁG'S "KAFKA FRAGMENTS"
The soprano Dawn Upshaw and the violinist Geoff Nuttall perform the Hungarian composer's iconoclastic masterpiece, in a staging by Peter Sellars. (Zankel Hall. 212-247-7800. Jan. 10 and Jan. 12-13 at 8:30. See This Week.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

"NEW YORK CITY CHEFS"
Mike Colameco, of the eponymous PBS food show, pulls three of the city's top chefs away from their kitchens to talk about satisfying local foodies. His guests are Michael Lomonaco, formerly of Windows on the World; Alfred Portale, the chef and owner of Gotham Bar and Grill; and Dan Barber, of Blue Hill and its back-to-the-land-in-a-limousine offshoot, Blue Hill at Stone Barns, located on the Rockefeller estate in Pocantico Hills. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 212-415-5500. Jan. 9 at 7:30.)

READINGS
Jan. 6 at 6:30: The Brooklyn poet Joshua Mehigan reads from his first book, "The Optimist." (Mid-Manhattan Library, Fifth Ave. at 40th St. 212-340-0833.) ♦ Jan. 10 at 8: Yann Martel, the author of "Life of Pi" and "Facts Behind the Helsinki Roccamatios," reads with Han Ong, author of "Fixer Chao" and "The Disinherited." (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 212-415-5500.) ♦ Jan. 11 at 6: The writer, actress, and screenwriter Carrie Fisher offers selections from "The Best Awful," her new sequel to "Postcards from the Edge." (Coliseum Books, 11 W. 42nd St. 212-803-5892.)

TALKS
Jan. 10 at 7:30: Antonino D'Ambrosio discusses his book "Let Fury Have the Hour: The Punk Rock Politics of Joe Strummer." He will be joined by Chuck D, of the hip-hop group Public Enemy, and others. (Barnes & Noble, 4 Astor Pl. No tickets necessary.) ♦ Jan. 12 at 7: Debra Singer, the executive director and curator of the Kitchen, talks about the exhibitions "Isamu Noguchi: Master Sculptor" (here in Manhattan) and "Noguchi and Graham: Selected Works for the Dance" (which is across the river at the artist's garden museum in Long Island City) with Noemie LaFrance and Julia Mandle. (Whitney Museum of American Art, Madison Ave. at 75th St. 212-570-3676.)


Replies to emails, returns call to office and checks game score.
Moves laptop from one shoulder to other.

Don't just stand there.

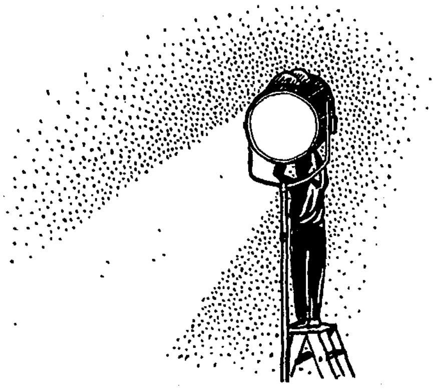
No connection? No outlet? Nowhere to sit? No problem. Introducing the Treo™ 650 smartphone by palmOne. It's the complete solution for wireless messaging, offering powerful email capabilities, text messaging, and a full-featured phone.* It comes with a web browser, a Palm Powered™ organizer, and a built-in QWERTY keyboard. Not only that but the Treo 650 also boasts some innovative new features including Bluetooth® and Sprint PCS Video Mail. And all this slips into your pocket so you can enjoy the convenience of a laptop, without the inconvenience of a laptop. Find out more at **www.palmOne.com/Sprint**.

Sprint®

Email. Phone. Organizer. **Treo**™

---

*Wireless service plan required. Email and web require wireless data services and ISP, and additional charges apply. Wireless coverage may not be available in all areas. Screen image simulated. ©2004 palmOne, Inc. All rights reserved. palmOne, Treo and Palm Powered are among the trademarks or registered trademarks owned by or licensed to palmOne, Inc. Sprint, the diamond logo, and all Sprint trademarks are property of Sprint Communications Company L.P. All other marks are property of their respective owners.



MOVIES OPENING

HITLER'S HIT PARADE
A documentary about the educational films, commercials, and popular music that accompanied the Nazi Party's rise to power. Directed by Oliver Axer and Susanne Benze. Opening Jan. 5. (Film Forum.)

WHITE NOISE
In a thriller directed by Geoffrey Sax, Michael Keaton plays an architect who believes that his murdered wife is attempting to contact him through his television and other electronic devices. Opening Jan. 7.

FILM NOTES

THE ASSASSINATION OF RICHARD NIXON
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Empire 25, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Union Square.)

THE AVIATOR
The billionaire madman, the taloned hermit of Las Vegas eating nothing but steak and peas—that was the haggard face in the tabloids that millions of us knew in the years before Howard Hughes's death, in 1976. Martin Scorsese's brilliantly entertaining movie goes back to the period when Hughes (Leonardo DiCaprio) was an exhilaratingly handsome and daring young man. The narrative, concocted by the screenwriter John Logan, is not meant to be taken literally. It's a fantasia about a studly capitalist prince who produces and directs movies, designs and flies airplanes, and sleeps with dozens of beautiful actresses and starlets. Scorsese and the designer Dante Ferretti press the young tycoon into the svelte Art Deco look of the period; in his tuxedos and casual beige flying duds, Hughes becomes the pictorial embodiment of restless bravado. Toward the end, there are glimpses of the germ-haunted paranoid that Hughes would become, but the movie is consistently lighthearted and engaging, a sort of pop "Citizen Kane." With Cate Blanchett doing a nervy imitation of Katharine Hepburn, Alec Baldwin as Hughes's rival, and Alan Alda as the corrupt Maine senator Owen Brewster.—*David Denby* (Reviewed in our issue of 12/20 & 27/04.) (Battery Park 11, Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema 1, East 86th Street Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

BAD EDUCATION
In an obscure parochial school in rural Spain, two young boys, Ignacio and Enrique, fell in love. But the boys were only eleven, and the affair was broken up by a priest and schoolmaster named Manolo. The priest, however, wasn't simply enforcing the rules. Father Manolo had already laid hands on Ignacio, and he wanted him entirely for himself. Pedro Almodóvar's extraordinary new drama, which is both a summary of his career and a deepening of his recent style, opens sixteen years after the affair, in 1980. Ignacio (Gael García Bernal), now a young actor, brings a manuscript to Enrique (Fele Martínez), who has become a well-known film director in Madrid. The manuscript chronicles the boys' friendship and what happened to Ignacio—he became a drag queen and a blackmailer. We see the story enacted; later, Enrique turns it into a movie, and we see that being filmed, too, at which point the priest, now an ex-priest, shows up, and we hear his version of the events. The truth of what happened to the grownup Ignacio and Enrique emerges in pieces: the three narratives, as they expand and correct one another, become a trio of mirrors producing endless off-angle reflections. The movie asks: Is love possible between men, or is it possible only between innocent boys? In Spanish.—*D.D.* (11/22/04) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Sunshine Cinema.)

BEYOND THE SEA
Kevin Spacey's wide-screen cinematic treatment of the fifties pop idol Bobby Darin is an exuberant but convoluted love letter. Taking his cues from Bob Fosse's "All That Jazz," Spacey creates a musical biography that's part fantasy (in the singing sequences) and part reality, but the movie never really jells. There's no getting around the fact that Spacey, at forty-five, can't play a baby-faced pop star, and the scenes of Darin's early years with his wife Sandra Dee (a pouty Kate Bosworth) don't come off. Still, there's a real razzle-dazzle to the movie, and the musical numbers, which are sung by Spacey himself, have been brilliantly arranged by John Wilson.—*Bruce Diones* (Angelika Film Center, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, and 19th Street East 6.)

THE CITY OF LOST CHILDREN
This retro-futuristic phantasmagoria about a mad scientist who steals kids' dreams is a gorgeous amalgam of nineteenth- and twentieth-century fantasy. The filmmakers, Jean-Pierre Jeunet and Marc Caro, want their pastiche to have the poetic cohesiveness of a fairy tale. Their hyper-inventiveness makes it more like a good whopper: the kind of gimcrack saga a kid concocts to save his hide when an adult threatens to tan it. On that tall-tale level the film is authentic, evocative, and consistently amusing. Jeunet and Caro have distinctive signatures like nobody else's. Released in 1995. In French.—*Michael Sragow* (Moving Image; Jan. 8.)

CLOSER
Patrick Marber has adapted his own hit play, of the same name, and given the lucky director, Mike Nichols, a script that he can chew on. Some viewers, or listeners, may flinch at the profanity here, or at the level of honesty that demands such profane expression, but peel away the carnal talk and what you are left with—the bone structure of the piece—is not so different from Noël Coward's "Private Lives." We get two interlocking couples: Dan (Jude Law), a writer who falls in love with Alice (Natalie Portman), a night-club stripper, and Larry (Clive Owen), a doctor who marries a photographer called Anna (Julia Roberts). The transactions are quick and brutal: Dan has anonymous online sex with Larry and a yearlong affair with Anna, Alice leaves Dan and finds work at a club, Larry finds her there and tells her precisely what he wants, and nobody is happy. The film is more civilized than the play, the acid slightly diluted, yet Law, for one, looks eaten away by the bitter pace of it all. Roberts, too, is haunted and pained, whereas Portman and Owen drink and spit their lines with undiminished relish, often at speeds that Nichols can barely handle. Not recommended for couples on a first date.—*Anthony Lane* (12/13/04) (Battery Park 11, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, 64th and 2nd, and Village Theatre VII.)

HOTEL RWANDA
Paul Rusesabagina (Don Cheadle), the Rwandan manager of the four-star Hôtel des Mille Collines, in Kigali, wears a blue suit and tie and is very polite, even deferential, toward everyone. Paul works for the Belgian company that owns the hotel, which has become an oasis for Europeans and for African élites. When the Hutu massacres of the Tutsi minority begin, in the spring of 1994, Paul keeps the Mille Collines running. He also, on the sly, establishes it as a haven for both Hutu and Tutsi fugitives, keeping them momentarily safe from the machete-wielding militia, who kill eight

advertisement

ON THE TOWN

Be the first to hear about events, promotions, and special offers from New Yorker advertisers.

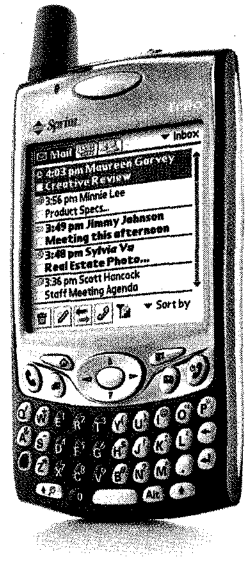
Returns email accepting invitation to sales meeting.

Takes call using Bluetooth® headset while updating calendar.

Emails photo of new office space using Sprint PCS Picture Mail.℠

Sends video message to kids using Sprint PCS Video Mail.

Slips Treo neatly into pocket for boarding.



Email. Phone. Organizer.

Treo™

Call 888-233-3538 or visit your local Sprint Store to learn more about an exclusive offer on the new Sprint PCS Vision℠ Smart Device Treo 650 by palmOne.

Sprint®

For more information, log on to www.newyorker.com and click on The New Yorker Reader Link.

hundred thousand people in a few months. Working in Rwanda and South Africa, the writer-director, Terry George, convincingly stages the horrors outside the hotel: the paralyzing fear in the night, the vilely inciting radio broadcasts, the chaos and arbitrary madness of the slaughter. But the true drama of "Hotel Rwanda" lies in the character of Paul, who is betrayed by the Europeans who formed him but who holds to his belief in civility, right through the worst disasters. The movie is a triumph for Cheadle—he never steps outside the character for emotional grandstanding or easy moralism.—*D.D.* (12/20 & 27/04) (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Square.)

HOUSE OF FLYING DAGGERS

Not a sequel to "Hero," the fantastical hit of the summer, but a chance for the same director, Zhang Yimou, to paint the screen red with his luscious and newly invigorated style. In the middle of the ninth century, two regional policemen (Andy Lau and Takeshi Kaneshiro) take on the might of the Flying Daggers, a furtive antigovernment organization. Their first break is to arrest Mei (Ziyi Zhang), a blind dancer who has all sorts of tricks up her sleeves, most of them liable to cut your throat. One cop goes undercover, hoping that Mei can be seduced into revealing the villains' lair. There is an unembarrassed scent of melodrama to all this, as if Zhang's plot had been infected by the excess of his violent ballets—the knives, arrows, kicks, and leaps with which every contest is resolved, and by which the characters demonstrate their respect for one another and their scorn for the laws of physics. At some point, though, the poise falters, and the movie, unlike "Hero," tips into silliness; in the lust to register nothing but beautiful patterns of movement, the claims of logic, political fear, and even love are blithely blown away. In Mandarin.—*A.L.* (12/13/04) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Union Square.)

THE INCREDIBLES

A shiny new project from Pixar, sprinting in the footsteps of "Toy Story." Bob and Helen Parr are retired superheroes, raising their suspiciously gifted children in the suburbs. Bob, stuck in an office job, is lured back to the fray; being a lunk, he stumbles into a trap, and Helen, being a wife, has the guts and initiative to set out and rescue him. The movie, written and directed by Brad Bird, is a smart compound of shameless visual exaggeration (Bob's muscle tone alone is a special effect) and a touchingly unhip reliance on emotional realism. Instead of giggling references to other movies, we get snatches of ordinary family bickering, plus a distinct air of nineteen-fifties innocence—quite a fillip, given that many computer-animated movies pride themselves on technological progress and nothing else. The main voice-overs are delivered by Craig T. Nelson, Samuel L. Jackson, and—most winning of all—Holly Hunter.—*A.L.* (11/22/04) (Battery Park 11, East 86th Street Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, New York Twin, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

KINSEY

Liam Neeson, his hair standing straight up like tensed wire, is the dauntless but neurotic sex researcher Alfred C. Kinsey in this vivacious and witty—even naughty—bio-pic, written and directed by Bill Condon. The movie covers Kinsey's entire adult life (with flashbacks to his boyhood), including his marriage to Clara McMillen (Laura Linney) and his relations with the much younger men—Clyde Martin (Peter Sarsgaard), Wardell Pomeroy (Chris O'Donnell), and Paul Gebhardt (Timothy Hutton)—who became, at Indiana University in the forties and fifties, the principal assistants on Kinsey's revolutionary books about male and female sexuality. At the movie's heart is a clever sequence devoted to the team's interviewing technique, a method of nonjudgmental inquiry that causes hundreds of thousands of subjects to open up and confess, with the result that behavior that had been isolated in the past as "deviant" or "perverted" came to seem like relatively common occurrences on the spectrum of human sexuality. Eager to sympathize and understand everyone, Kinsey the liberator plunges into gay bars, homosexual relationships, and once-a-philosopher-twice-a-pervert masochistic practices. Condon presents him as a genuine hero who drove himself into semi-madness and exhaustion, a sacrificial figure who died for our pleasure.—*D.D.* (11/29/04) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Sunshine Cinema.)

At MOMA, a screening of Fritz Lang's 1928 thriller, "Spies."

MICHAEL KUPPERMAN

LEMONY SNICKET'S A SERIES OF UNFORTUNATE EVENTS

A mixed bag of sour treats. The voice-over to the film (by Jude Law) and the excellent Dickensian production design capture the sinister edge of these Roald Dahl-like children's books about the orphaned Baudelaire siblings and their dark adventures. But Jim Carrey, as their dastardly guardian Count Olaf, delivers such an outsized, distracting performance that all sense of danger and triumph is leeched from the film. The director, Brad Silberling, squanders the gothic mood with showboating action sequences, although there are some wonderfully spot-on performances by the supporting cast, especially Meryl Streep and Billy Connolly.—*B.D.* (Battery Park 11, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, New York Twin, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

MAN WITH A MOVIE CAMERA

Dziga Vertov celebrates the dynamic variety of quotidian urban life in his silent masterpiece, the apex of the symphony-of-the-street movie. Setting a prototype cameraman loose to chronicle an unnamed Soviet metropolis from dawn to dusk, he records the commotion on the boulevard, the newfangled exercise machines that would fit right into today's infomercials, the goofiness and the chagrin at a bureau that handles both divorce and marriage. A protean stylist, Vertov deploys every device from split and superimposed images to pixellation and freeze frames; his film has wit as well as gusto, a clearheaded lyricism, and a robust, sometimes vaudevillian humor. (Was he the first to cut from a supine woman to a hurtling train?) Released in 1928. In Russian.—*M.S.* (Anthology Film Archives; Jan. 8.)

MEET THE FOCKERS

"Meet the Parents" was pretty focking great (and it gets better with age), but this sequel is mostly average, despite the genius casting of Dustin Hoffman and Barbra Streisand as the parents of Gaylord Focker (Ben Stiller). As a hippie lawyer, Hoffman has the most fun in the picture; he breaks out his hyperverbal patter and talks circles around everyone.—*Michael Agger* (Battery Park 11, Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

MILLION DOLLAR BABY

Much of Clint Eastwood's evocative and poetic boxing movie is set in the Hit Pit, a moldy, sweat-stained downtown Los Angeles gym in which crusty veterans train a few serious fighters and many hapless punks. Scrap (Morgan Freeman), an ex-fighter with one functioning eye, works at the gym and exchanges affectionately nasty remarks with the owner, one Frankie Dunn (Eastwood). Against his better judgment, Frankie agrees to take on a tough country woman, Maggie Fitzgerald (Hilary Swank), who, not entirely to our surprise, rapidly becomes the hottest fighter in the sordid but lucrative world of women's boxing. The story, adapted by Paul Haggis from F. X. Toole's collection, "Rope Burns," is borderline trite, but the movie has the sweet melancholy of a great jazz piece.—*D.D.* (12/20 & 27/04) (Angelika Film Center, Empire 25, and Lincoln Square.)

OCEAN'S TWELVE

Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Battery Park 11, 84th Street Sixplex, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

THE RED SHOES

One of the most "imaginative" and elaborate backstage musicals ever filmed, and many have called it great. The film contains a fourteen-minute ballet, also called "The Red Shoes," based on a Hans Christian Andersen story about a wicked shoemaker who sells an enchanted pair of slippers to a young girl. Delighted at first with the slippers in which she dances joyously, she discovers that the slippers will not let her stop dancing—and the bewitched, exhausted girl dies. The film's story is, of course, the same story spelled out in more complicated terms, with the shoemaker of the ballet (Léonide Massine) replaced by the megalomaniac ballet impresario (Anton Walbrook). The exquisite young Moira Shearer is the ballerina. Blubbery and self-conscious, but it affects some people passionately, and it's undeniably some kind of classic. Written, produced, and directed by Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger—master purveyors of high kitsch. Released in 1948.—*Pauline Kael* (Walter Reade Theatre; Jan. 7.)

THE SEA INSIDE
The director Alejandro Amenábar's follow-up to his big American hit ("The Others") is a Spanish-language film—the true-life story of Ramón Sampedro, a quadriplegic who led a campaign in favor of his right to die. As Sampedro, Javier Bardem gives a small miracle of a performance. Confined to his bed, unable to move, Bardem has an uncanny ability to express mystery and resilience. The movie centers on Sampedro's loving family and the two women who try to change his life (one supports his euthanasia, the other doesn't). The dialogue is, at times, poetic, and there's a moving, somnambulistic feel to the film—it slowly drifts asleep.—*B.D.* (Sunshine Cinema.)

SIDEWAYS
Paul Giamatti has no chin to speak of, a round-shouldered physique, and the nervous smile of a craven dog. He's the anti-ideal of the American male, and he's making a brilliant career of it. In this wonderful movie by the team of Alexander Payne (writer-director) and Jim Taylor (co-writer), Giamatti plays Miles, a failed novelist around forty who takes off for a wine-tasting tour with his buddy Jack (Thomas Haden Church), a washed-up TV actor who is about to get married. What starts as a last fling at freedom becomes for the two men—but centrally for Miles—a confrontation with middle age and stasis. Miles is a bibliophile, a cinephile, and an oenophile. Jack, however, couldn't care less—in every way, he's blissfully undiscriminating. On the road, the men meet Maya (Virginia Madsen), a divorced graduate student who works as a waitress, and Stephanie (Sandra Oh), a sexy "pour girl." The music and the camera setups are at times pedestrian, but the rest of "Sideways" is vivid and bitterly funny.—*D.D.* (10/25/04) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Battery Park 11, Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Union Square.)

SPANGLISH
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Battery Park 11, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

SPIES
Fritz Lang shows off his amazing ability to direct like a kinetic architect in this pioneering espionage film from a script by Thea von Harbou, his wife. The story of a superagent (Willy Fritsch) who destroys a master criminal named Haghi (Rudolf Klein-Rogge) and saves a gorgeous Russian spy (Gerda Maurus) has slushy, ludicrous sequences. But Lang's precision, inventiveness, and barrelling pace firm up and energize the material, from the headlong opening montage of assassination and theft to the closing scene of Haghi trapped onstage doing a clown act—a bit that must have influenced Hitchcock. Released in 1928.—*M.S.* (Museum of Modern Art; Jan. 7-8.)

TAXI DRIVER
Robert De Niro is in almost every frame of Martin Scorsese's feverish, horrifyingly funny movie about a lonely New York cabdriver. De Niro's inflamed, brimming eyes are the focal point of the compositions. He's Travis Bickle, an outsider who can't find any point of entry into human society. He drives nights because he can't sleep anyway; surrounded by the night world of the uprooted—whores, pimps, transients—he hates New York with a Biblical fury, and its filth and smut obsess him. This ferociously powerful film is like a raw, tabloid version of "Notes from Underground." Scorsese achieves the quality of trance in some scenes, and the whole movie has a sense of vertigo. The cinematographer, Michael Chapman, gives the street life a seamy, rich pulpiness. From Paul Schrader's script; with Harvey Keitel, Cybill Shepherd, Jodie Foster, Peter Boyle, Albert Brooks, and Scorsese himself. Released in 1976.—*P.K.* (Film Forum; Jan. 5-11.)

THE WOODSMAN
As a paroled pedophile battling his demons, Kevin Bacon gives one of his finest performances to date in this uncomfortable, melancholic film by the first-time director Nicole Kassell. The topic makes for a high-wire début, but Kassell does a good job balancing a story that asks for a certain amount of empathy for a heinous character. There's a delicacy to Bacon's acting that turns his character's messy psychological details into a compelling drama. With the excellent Mos Def as a contemptuous probation cop.—*B.D.* (Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, and Sunshine Cinema.)

ALSO PLAYING

ANDREW LLOYD WEBBER'S THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA (1/3/05)
Battery Park 11, Chelsea West, Cinema 1, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, Union Square, and Ziegfeld.

IN GOOD COMPANY
Lincoln Square.

THE LIFE AQUATIC WITH STEVE ZISSOU
Battery Park 11, Beekman, Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Village East Cinemas.

THE MERCHANT OF VENICE (1/3/05)
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and 19th Street East 6.

A VERY LONG ENGAGEMENT
Paris and Sunshine Cinema.

THEATRE ADDRESSES

Unless noted, call 212-777-FILM for show times.

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
BAM Rose Cinemas, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn.
Battery Park 11, West St. at Vesey St.
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinemas 1, 2, and 3, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (212-924-3363).
East 86th Street Cinemas, Third Ave. at 86th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
Empire 25, on 42nd St. near Eighth Ave. (212-398-3939).
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
42nd Street E Walk, 42nd St. near Eighth Ave.
Kips Bay Theatre, Second Ave. at 32nd St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St. (212-757-2280).
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 66th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (212-688-3800).
Pioneer Theatre, 155 E. 3rd St. (212-254-3300).
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
Sunshine Cinema, 143 E. Houston St. (212-330-8182).
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
34th Street Theatre, 312 W. 34th St.
Union Square, Broadway at 13th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—Through Jan. 9: A Jean-Pierre Jeunet retrospective. All films are in French. Jan. 5 at 7: "A Very Long Engagement" (2004), followed by an interview with Jeunet. ♦ Jan. 6 at 7: "Delicatessen" (1991). ♦ Jan. 8 at 6:30: "The City of Lost Children" (†). ♦ Jan. 9 at 6:30: "Amélie" (2001). ♦ Films from Asia. Jan. 7 at 7:30: "The Hunter and the Hunted" (2003, Izuru Narushima; in Japanese). ♦ Through Feb. 13: Films selected by the New York Film Critics Circle. Jan. 8 at 2: "Piccadilly" (1929, E. A. Dupont). ♦ Jan. 8 at 4:30: "Hero" (2002, Zhang Yimou; in Mandarin). ♦ Jan. 9 at 1: "The Incredibles" (†), followed by an interview with the director, Brad Bird. ♦ Jan. 9 at 4:30: "Maria Full of Grace" (2004, Joshua Marston).

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES
32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (212-505-5110)—The films of Dziga Vertov. Jan. 6 at 8: "Stride, Soviet!" (1926). ♦ Jan. 7 at 8: "A Sixth of the World" (1926). ♦ Jan. 8 at 7: "The Eleventh Year" (1928). ♦ Jan. 8 at 8:30: "Man with a Movie Camera" (†). ♦ Jan. 9 at 7: "Enthusiasm" (1931). ♦ Jan. 9 at 8:30: "Three Songs About Lenin" (1934). ♦ "Essential Cinema." Jan. 7 at 8:30: "Fireworks" (1947) and other Kenneth Anger films. ♦ Jan. 8 at 8: "Scorpio Rising" (1963) and other Anger films.

FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—Jan. 5-11 at 1:10, 3:45, 7, and 9:30: "Taxi Driver" (†).

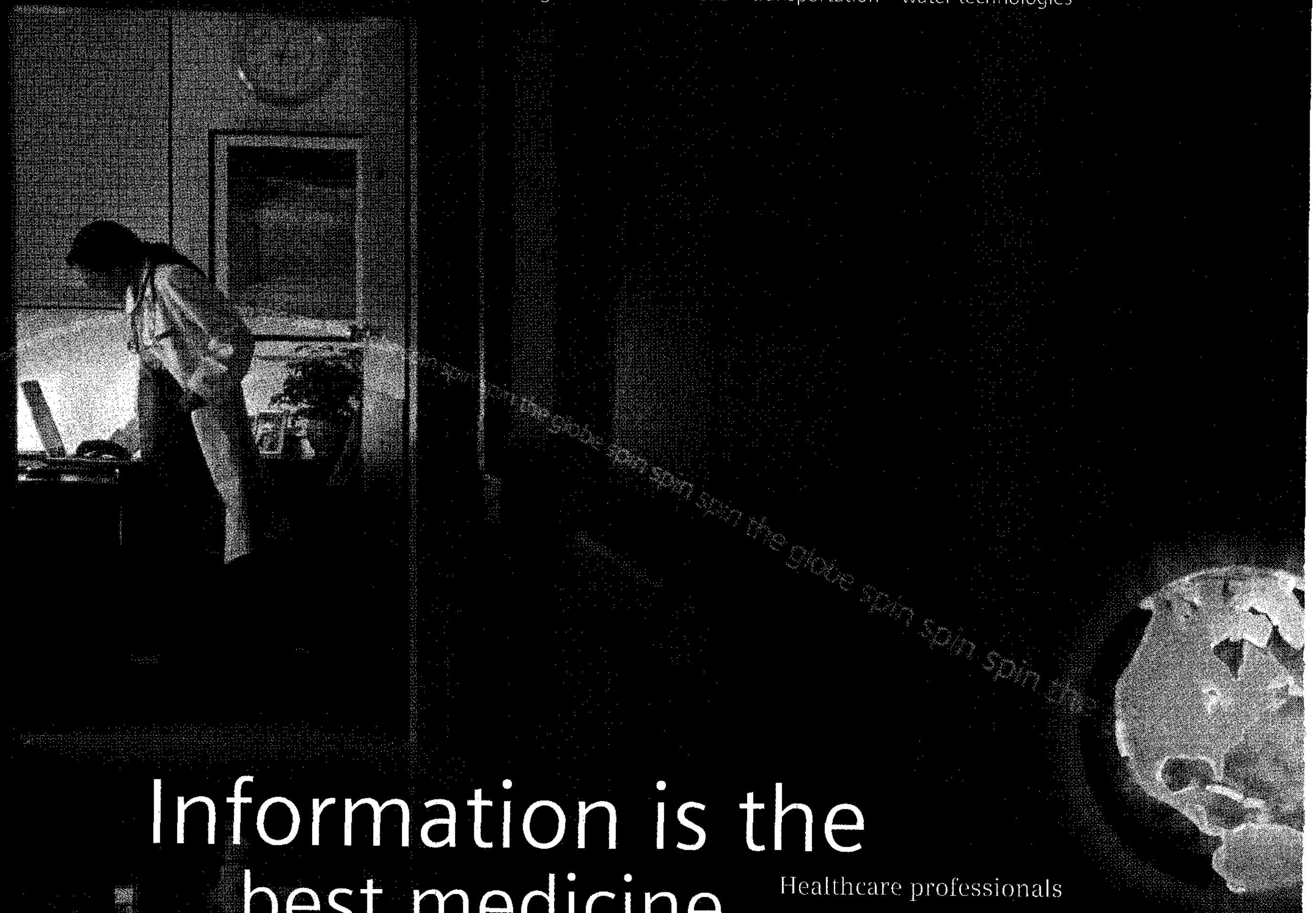
FLORENCE GOULD HALL
55 E. 59th St. (212-355-6160)—Claire Denis films. Jan. 11 at 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, and 9: "No Fear, No Die" (1990; in French).

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9480)—Through Jan. 31: "Premières," new films and recent restorations. Jan. 5 at 6 and Jan. 9 at 2:30: "New Tales of the Taira Clan" (1955, Kenji Mizoguchi; in Japanese). ♦ Jan. 5 at 7:30 and Jan. 8 at 2:30: "The Moon and the Son: An Imagined Conversation" (2004, John Canemaker) and "I'm Bobby" (2004, Xav Leplae). ♦ Jan. 6 at 7:30: "Happy Rebirth" (2004, Bjørn Melhus) and seven other shorts. ♦ Jan. 6 at 8:30: "Nobody Knows" (2004, Kore-eda Hirokazu; in Japanese). ♦ Jan. 7 at 5: "Walk of Three Chairs" (2003, Breda Beban) and two other shorts. ♦ Jan. 7 at 5:45 and Jan. 8 at 2: "Spies" (†). ♦ Jan. 7 at 8 and Jan. 9 at 5: "Timbuktu" (2003, Alan Gilsenan). ♦ Jan. 7 at 8:30: "Sucker Free City" (2004, Spike Lee). ♦ Jan. 8 at 5: "Strictly Ballroom" (1992, Baz Luhrmann). ♦ Jan. 8 at 5: "All White People Are French" (2004, Katja Straub) and six other shorts. ♦ Jan. 8 at 7:30: "Chain" (2004, Jem Cohen). ♦ Jan. 8 at 8: "What Remains of Us" (2004, François Prevost and Hugo Latulippe). ♦ Jan. 9 at 11:30 A.M.: "The Illustrated Mum" (2003, Cilla Ware). ♦ Jan. 9 at 2: "Testimony" (2004, Kara Walker) and six other shorts. ♦ Jan. 10 at 5:30: The first and second chapters of "Histoire(s) du Cinéma" (1998, Jean-Luc Godard; in French). ♦ Jan. 10 at 6:15: Stan Brakhage films. ♦ Jan. 10 at 5:30: The third and fourth chapters of "Histoire(s) du Cinéma" (1998, Godard; in French). ♦ Through Dec. 31: "112 Years of Cinema." Jan. 5 at 5: "Daughters of the Dust" (1991, Julie Dash). ♦ Jan. 5 at 8:15 and Jan. 6 at 5: "The Lady and the Mouse" (1913, D. W. Griffith) and other shorts. ♦ Miramax's twenty-fifth anniversary. Jan. 9 at 5:30: "Reservoir Dogs" (1992, Quentin Tarantino). ♦ Jan. 10 at 8:15: A conversation with Tarantino and Uma Thurman, moderated by *The New Yorker's* Larissa MacFarquhar.

SUNSHINE CINEMA
143 E. Houston St. (212-330-8182)—Midnight movies. Jan. 7-8: "Rushmore" (1998, Wes Anderson).

WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (212-875-5600)—Special screening. Jan. 5 at 1, 3:30, 6:15, and 8:45: "Playtime" (1967, Jacques Tati; in French, English, and German). ♦ Through Jan. 25: Dance on Camera Festival. Jan. 7 at 1: "The Gods of Bali" (1952, Robert Snyder). ♦ Jan. 7 at 3: "The Red Shoes" (†). ♦ Jan. 7 at 6: "Carmen and Geoffrey" (2004, Linda Atkinson and Nick Doob). ♦ Jan. 7 at 9 and Jan. 8 at 1: Eight international shorts. ♦ Jan. 8 at 8:30: Tap and contemporary-ballet films. ♦ Jan. 8 at 6:30: "Amelia" (2003, Édouard Lock). ♦ Jan. 8 at 8:30: "New Dance Produced in France."

Siemens USA: automation & control • building technologies • energy & power • financial services • home appliances
information & communication • lighting • material handling • medical solutions • transportation • water technologies


spin spin the globe spin spin spin the globe spin spin spin the

Information is the best medicine.

Healthcare professionals perform best when they're well informed. By successfully integrating medical and information technologies, Siemens provides physicians and health executives with instant access to critical information so they can make the right decisions right away. From medication management systems to networked imaging systems, Siemens provides medical solutions to improve workflow, reduce costs and, most importantly, make cutting-edge care available to everyone, everywhere.

Whether enhancing the quality and efficiency of healthcare, developing transportation systems that make travel safer and more reliable or being the world leader in logic controllers for industrial automation, Siemens is reshaping and redefining entire industries. We have 70,000 U.S. employees working together with thousands more all around the world. Exchanging ideas. Sharing knowledge. And strengthening America's infrastructure and businesses.

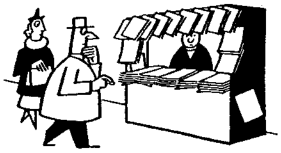
SIEMENS
Global network of innovation

www.usa.siemens.com

THE
NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

LETTER FROM KALAPET
TSUNAMI

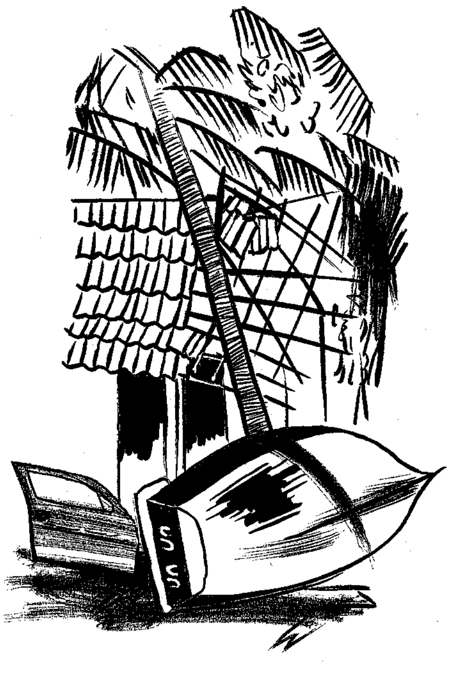


No one who survived the tsunami that crashed into South India on December 26th describes it as a wave. The fishermen and villagers who live along the coast, and whose homes and livelihoods were swept away, speak of a "wall of water." The wall came without warning, rising suddenly to more than fifteen feet, and, along with cars and refrigerators and cattle and jewelry, claimed a death toll that defied comprehension as it escalated through the week. By Thursday night, more than ten thousand were dead in South India, and well over a hundred thousand across Asia, making it one of the most devastating natural disasters in history.

The wave came later. It was a wave of people, crawling inland with babies and baskets piled on their heads and shoulders, searching for higher ground. These refugees settled into makeshift camps, in a band between the flooded coast and the hinterland. Just a few miles inland from the ocean, however, life seemed to go on normally. On the morning the tsunami hit, I was at home in the town where I grew up, Auroville, an international utopian community outside the old French colonial city of Pondicherry, near the coast. I first learned about the tsunami while surfing the Internet. That day, in my town, people went out to dinner, played cricket and soccer, and, just like residents of Tokyo or New York, watched the tragedy unfold primarily as a distant media spectacle. In a restaurant, just a few hours after the tsunami had struck, I encountered a dozen patrons in their Sunday best carrying on with their luncheon.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

Over the next few days, as fears of aftershocks and more tsunamis subsided, that zone of normalcy began widening, creeping back toward the shore. A reverse wave of migration took place, with coastal residents returning to their ruined villages to salvage their belongings and take advantage of government aid. The roads were filled once again, this time with men and women in bandages and donated clothes, many clutching white cardboard sheets—their medical records. At refugee camps that had been set up a safe distance from the coast, the tents were taken down, the temporary kitchens disassembled. The tragedy was not exactly erased but had at least been quarantined, consigned to its origins.



On Wednesday, three days after the disaster, some residents had returned to the South Indian fishing village of Kalapet, near Pondicherry. Three men, one absent-mindedly delousing a child in his lap, sat on the remains of a boat and, glassy-eyed, surveyed the destruction. A few days before, the beach had been littered with corpses: at least twenty people had died in this village, and another fifty in surrounding hamlets; several more were missing. Now the corpses were in the morgue and the beach was a tangle of fishing nets, television sets, and punched-out cupboards. The thatch roofing strewn across the sand was drier and, at least on parts of the waterfront, piled in neat bundles. Motorboats that had been thrown up against coconut trees were back on the ground, their engines wrenched out and lying a few feet away.

Karunakaran, one of the men sitting on the boat, said that the village had been empty right after the tsunami, but now it was filling up again. Several political dignitaries—from Pondicherry, from New Delhi—had visited; they had promised a lot. Homes would be rebuilt, compensation would be paid to the injured. Families of the dead were each to get a hundred thousand rupees ($2,300), a princely sum in these parts. But, in order to claim the money, families had to produce a corpse—and many of the dead had been swept out to sea.

There was little sign on the Kalapet beach of the mass relief exercise being reported in the media. A few workers were loading a truck with the thatch bundles; a nun from the local mission, which had lost two children, was staring at the ocean with the same vacant look as the men. I couldn't make out any international presence—no United Nations or Red Cross or Oxfam.

Up the road, in the government high school, a cluster of concrete one- and two-story buildings organized around a courtyard, the relief effort was somewhat more vigorous. More than a thousand refugees, primarily children but also their adult relatives, were crammed into the classrooms, and the walls were draped with clothes hung up to dry. The toilets were overflowing. In parts of the school, the ground was strewn with feces and plastic bags and clumps of fermenting rice. A sanitation worker threw handfuls of bleaching powder on piles of waste.

In the courtyard, amid the bleach clouds, the children chased each other. One was blowing into a kazoo; another played a harmonica. The headmaster surveyed them sourly. "There's *too* much food," he declared. "We're being forced to throw it away." He said that the government had been delivering batches of rice to the school every fifty minutes. Of course, most villages in the vast area struck by the tsunami weren't nearly as fortunate as Kalapet. Parts of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and parts of Indonesia, where the death toll is much higher, had not even been reached by aid workers at the end of last week.

UNICEF estimated that children accounted for at least a third of the dead across Asia, and nearly all the students in the Kalapet school had lost a friend. But a teacher who had been summoned back to duty over the holidays marvelled at their cheerfulness. It was true: the schoolyard-turned-refugee camp was like a playground. Crowds gathered around a mobile water tank, chattering eagerly and tapping the pipes as government workers transferred the water to the school's tanks. Girls and boys, freed from parental oversight, eyed each other nervously and giggled.

On a second-floor veranda overlooking the courtyard, some boys were chewing sugarcane and acting out roles from Tamil movies. One teen-ager climbed over the parapet and jumped to the ground, a drop of more than a dozen feet. "What are you doing?" the girls yelled. "You'll break your legs."

"People lost their lives—what do I care if I break my legs?" the boy shouted back, and he sauntered off, swinging his hips and singing a song from a movie.

The day before, local authorities had hosted a health camp at the school. The headmaster said that the relief work was going very well. Soon, he said, he would be conducting a household survey to account for the dead. At the back of the compound, two workers from the education department were going through the school's attendance records, trying to build a preliminary list of the missing.

On Thursday afternoon, the wave of people headed inland again. The Indian government had issued a warning that another tsunami might be on the way. Scenes from just a few days earlier were replayed: entire families, mothers and fathers and grandparents and babies, suitcases in hand, making their way inland under the harsh midday sun. Motorcycles were streaking in from the coast, four (or even five) riders per bike.

The new tsunami, which local police said was approaching at three hundred m.p.h., was expected to hit the coast in another hour or two. Stories circulated that it had already reached Sri Lanka and other parts of India.

By midafternoon, it appeared that the rumors were wrong—an overreaction,

THE WOODPECKER PECKS, BUT THE HOLE DOES NOT APPEAR

It's hard to imagine how unremembered we all become,
How quickly all that we've done
Is unremembered and unforgiven,
how quickly
Bog lilies and yellow clover flashlight our footfalls,
How quickly and finally the landscape subsumes us,
And everything that we are becomes what we are not.

This is not new, the orange finch
And the yellow-and-dun finch
picking the dry clay politely,
The grasses asleep in their green slips
Before the noon can roust them,
The sweet oblivion of the everyday
like a warm waistcoat
Over the cold and endless body of memory.

Cloud-scarce Montana morning.
July, with its blue cheeks puffed out like a *putto* on an ancient map,
Huffing the wind down from the northwest corner of things,
Tweets on the evergreen stumps,
swallows treading the air,
The ravens hawking from tree to tree, *not you, not you,*
Is all that the world allows, and all one could wish for.

—*Charles Wright*

perhaps, by a nervous government that had been criticized for not issuing a warning about the first wave. Down by the beach, a motorcycle mechanic tinkered with a gearbox and said he wasn't planning to leave his workshop. But thousands had already left for higher ground. Up the road, in a refugee camp that had been deserted just that morning, it was all starting again.

Outside the high school, on the East Coast Road, there were fewer ambulances now, and more government welfare vehicles, than there had been in recent days. A policeman gave a boy some candy, and a man shouted into a public telephone that his brother was in the hospital, he had lost everything, and he needed to postpone his meeting.

Most of the shops were shuttered, but for the local electronics repairman business was brisk. His storefront was piled with television sets and videocassette players. A couple stood watching as the shop owner took apart a DVD player. The DVD was still inside, and the components were caked with mud.

"Go home," the owner told the couple. "We'll call you if we can fix it."

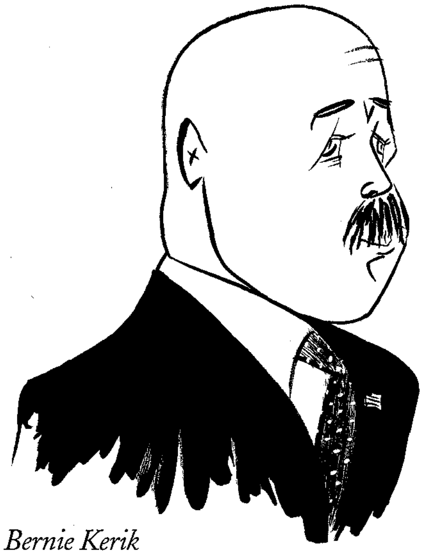
"Where should I go?" the woman said, laughing. "I don't have a home."

—*Akash Kapur*

DEPT. OF MELTDOWNS

BUSTED

Bernard B. Kerik's concern for his immortal reputation as Police Commissioner was such that—in an especially delicious detail that surfaced in his monthlong transformation from Presidential appointee to middle-aged unemployed guy—one of the things he apparently commissioned was a set of thirty plaster busts of himself to be distributed as gifts to fortunate friends and dignitaries. Kerik's immortality will, it is now clear, be of a different sort entirely, as he enters the pantheon of celebrated New Yorkers who have been dramatically undone by their own high-handedness or low dealings. The largest difficulty in considering the Kerik downfall is knowing in which niche of public disgrace to categorize him. As Henry Stern, the former Parks Commissioner, noted in his regular e-mail newsletter to friends and supporters the other day, "Officials have gotten into trouble for sexual misconduct, abusing their authority, personal bankruptcy, failure to file documents, waste of public funds, receiving substantial unrecorded gifts, and association with organized crime figures. It is rare for anyone to be under fire on all seven of the above issues."



Bernie Kerik

Kerik's multiplatformed flameout, which combined, as all the best scandals do, allegations of graft, egregious grandiosity, and the seasoning salt of adultery, may have deprived New Yorkers of the pleasure of having one of their own close to the Presidential ear, but it has at least provided the spectacle of a career crash surpassing any other that occurred last year. Martha Stewart has managed to transform her penitentiary chastisement into an opportunity for personal growth for herself and for impersonal growth for her bottom line: a new television show, produced by Mark Burnett, awaits when she emerges. Across the Hudson, the former New Jersey governor James McGreevey began his second act, as a gay American, while still just bringing down the curtain on his first—being an allegedly corruptible politician—without even a pause for intermission.

In the past, public figures have found differing means of dealing with unsought notoriety: Kimba Wood, whose potential nomination for Attorney General, in 1993, was derailed after she revealed that she had hired an illegal immigrant as a nanny, survived the embarrassment of being called the Love Judge by the New York *Post* when details from a diary kept by her lover, Frank Richardson, were helpfully supplied to the courts, and thus to the newspapers, by Richardson's wife. Wood now has the satisfaction not only of retaining her seat on the court of the Southern District of New York but of being married to Richardson, whose name, when mentioned in the newspapers, is generally preceded by words like "investment banker," "wealthy," or "gazillionaire."

Kerik, whose own nanny problem has emerged as only the presenting symptom of a much larger career malaise, seems likely to suffer a more complete obliteration of his reputation. But the circumstances of his fall are certainly not as decisive as those of perhaps the most spectacular career meltdown in political memory, that of Donald Manes. Manes was the Queens Borough President whose response to being caught handing out parking-violations contracts to friends and fee-paying associates, in the mid-eighties, was, first, to attempt suicide by slashing his wrist, and then, several weeks later, actually to commit suicide by plunging a kitchen knife into his chest.

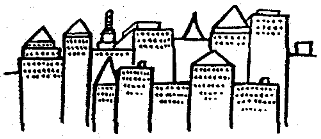
Although there are, by the sound of things, all kinds of people who might have been tempted at some point to take a knife to Kerik—he was, while married, allegedly carrying on not just one affair but two, with a corrections officer named Jeanette Pinero and with his publisher, Judith Regan—suicide, for the most part, remains metaphorical when it comes to public scandal. Reputations that have seemed irretrievably besmirched have been at least partially rehabilitated. Consider Sol Wachtler, the chief justice of the New York State Court of Appeals, who was touted as a potential candidate for governor before his own disintegration, during which, it was revealed, he had not just engaged in an affair but had stalked and attempted to extort money from his former mistress, Joy Silverman, and had threatened to kidnap her fourteen-year-old daughter. Justice, traditionally blind, was also in this case suffering from another disability, that of mental illness, and after serving about a year in prison Wachtler published a memoir entitled "After the Madness" and started giving speeches at conferences on mental-health issues. His effort to be reinstated to the New York bar in 2003 was, though, met with a response that might be paraphrased thus: Reinstate you? You must be out of your mind.

Having already written an autobiography, Kerik lacks that particular route of exculpation. His book, which offers up its first expletive two words in, is, of course, testament to the rough-edged authenticity that endeared him to Bush in the first place. (Perhaps the President believed that any seaminess in Kerik's personal life might be limited to his revelation that his mother worked as a prostitute—a new and tragic twist to the scandal standby of the protagonist being caught in bed with a hooker.) The next edition of the book presents an opportunity for him to address various inconsistencies that have now come to light—Kerik might discuss the first wife he omitted to mention in the original edition, for one thing—although the title, "The Lost Son: A Life in Pursuit of Justice," might need tweaking.

Many of the busts that Kerik commissioned were reportedly destroyed before they could be distributed, but Kerik has nonetheless achieved a different kind of commemoration. The detention facility commonly known as the Tombs was officially named the Bernard B. Kerik Complex in December, 2001, and Mayor Bloomberg has said there are no plans to rename it. And it turns out that Henry Stern, who served alongside Kerik in the Giuliani administration, once granted him the honor of a Parks Department name, or a "park name"—the nickname that it was Stern's habit to bestow on just about anyone he had dealings with. (Giuliani's park name is Eagle.) When Stern consulted his records last week, he discovered that the name tailored to fit Kerik had happily retained its aptness, in spite of Kerik's professional demise: it is Character.

—*Rebecca Mead*

POSTSCRIPT
SUSAN SONTAG



Susan Sontag, who wrote for this magazine on and off for more than thirty years, died last Tuesday, to everyone's surprise, for though she had been in treatment for cancer intermittently since the nineteen-seventies, she never got it into her head—or, therefore, into anyone else's—that this disease might kill her. Such an idea was a violation of her deepest need, the need to live, and to have the experiences that the world might give her. Once, writing of her childhood, and the family's barbecues, she said, "I ate and ate. . . . I was always hungry." Hungry she remained. She read everything, and she wrote everything: novels, stories, plays, essays on literature, film, politics. She made movies. She gave speeches. She went to North Vietnam, Cuba, and Bosnia and sent back reports. There was almost nothing she felt she couldn't do, nothing she wasn't planning to do, very soon.

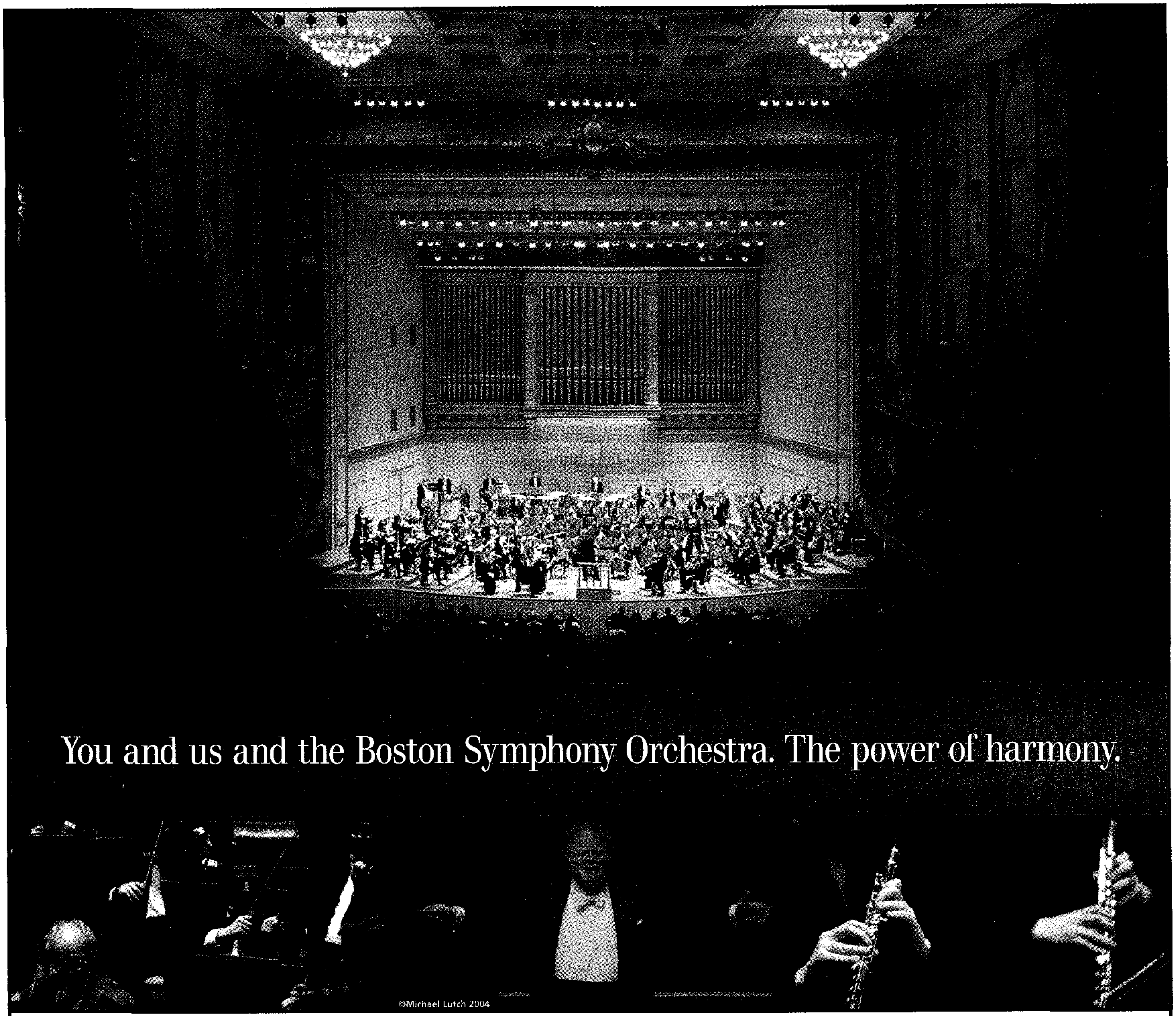
When I began interviewing her, in 1999, for a profile in this magazine, she had just undergone a new, very aggressive series of cancer treatments, which left her with nerve damage. She was living on painkillers; she had to look at her feet as she walked. But never mind that, she said cheerfully. She had embarked on a whole new life. Before, she had been an essayist. Now she was a novelist. In fact, she had written two novels at the beginning of her career, in the sixties. She didn't like them much, so she became a critic, indeed, the most famous and influential young critic of the sixties and seventies, a central figure in the aesthetic *bouleversement* of that period: the absorption of pop culture into high culture, the abandonment of classical form for modernist fracture, the enthronement of the shattered consciousness in place of realism and morals and beginning-middle-and-end. But by 1999, as far as she was concerned, that was all over with. She was writing novels, with realism and morals, beginnings, middles, and ends. She had already produced one such book in 1992, "The Volcano Lover," about Lord Nelson's fabled affair with a married woman, Emma Hamilton. It had been a best-seller. Now she had just finished an even more ambitious historical novel, "In America," and she was starting another novel, about modern Japan.

It's not clear what, in the future, will be made of Sontag's many-sided career. It may be that the fiction will be treated as a secondary matter. "The Volcano Lover" was a high peak of modern psychological realism, but Sontag never matched it in her other novels. If there is one achievement that people should remember her for, it is the critical essays, mostly on writers and filmmakers, that she collected in "Against Interpretation" (1966), the volume that made her famous; "Styles of Radical Will" (1969); and "Under the Sign of Saturn" (1980). The other book that will have a long life is "On Photography" (1977), which, like "The Volcano Lover," was a best-seller, but which, being a monograph on the distancing power of photographs, did not exactly seem destined for that popular honor. In these writings Sontag combined a passion for new ways of seeing (Godard, Artaud, "happenings") with a fidelity to classical values (truth, beauty, decency), and thus built a bridge for us, showed us how to cross over into the modern.

Later, when the modern actually supplanted the classical, she rued her contribution to this development. Likewise, political developments. A committed leftist, she praised the regimes of Cuba and North Vietnam in the sixties, and she described the "white race" as "the cancer of human history." This won her much antipathy from the right. Then, in 1982, she publicly proclaimed that Communism was Fascism—a reversal that earned her even more scorn from some on the right (*now* she got the point?) while also alienating many on the left.

But, as she saw it, she was entitled to frame bold opinions, and to change them as the world changed. In her early years, Sontag spent a good deal of time in Paris, and she was something that is far more common in France than in the United States: a public intellectual, a person with the right, even the duty, to put forth ideas, as a contribution to the society's discussion of its life. She was also very earnest and emotional. When she talked, her eyes would well up with tears over such things as the Burmese government or Hilton Kramer or "The Brothers Karamazov." To her, reading and experience were not just mental events; she received them as flaming darts. Without her, New York City seems a colder place.

—*Joan Acocella*


You and us and the Boston Symphony Orchestra. The power of harmony.

©Michael Lutch 2004

Take the esteemed talent of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Combine it with the insights of music director James Levine. And you have an example of how great performances can happen when people work together. At UBS, we collaborate with our clients to understand their needs and help provide them with financial opportunities. When people are in concert, the results can be extraordinary. You and us.

UBS is the proud season sponsor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra.

| Wealth Management | Global Asset Management | Investment Bank

UBS

©UBS 2004. The key symbol and UBS are registered and unregistered trademarks of UBS. All rights reserved.

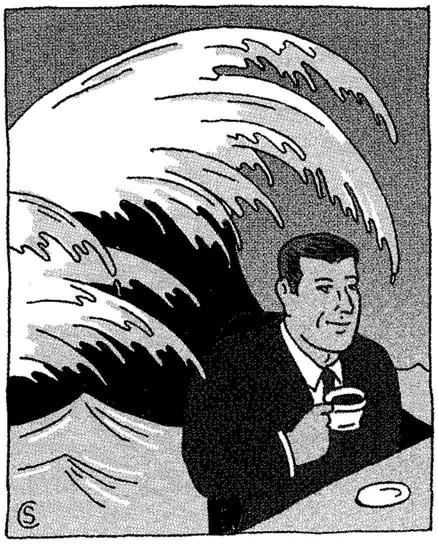
THE FINANCIAL PAGE
THE CATASTROPHE PROBLEM

Markets are heartless. And so, last week, as the world was dealing with the human consequences of the tsunami that devastated South Asia, investors were pondering the financial consequences—especially for insurance companies. But the pondering did not go on for long. It quickly became clear that, despite the inconceivable number of dead and the obliteration of entire coastlines, in dollar terms the tsunami's impact would be relatively small.

The obvious reason is that the affected countries are relatively poor, which means that the people and the businesses there are less likely to have insurance. But even wealthy nations are not well insured against disasters such as this one. The earthquake that hit Kobe, Japan, in 1995 did more than a hundred billion dollars in damage, yet, although the city sits atop a known fault line, only three per cent of the property in the area was insured against earthquakes. Even before the tsunami, this past year—in which there were four big hurricanes in Florida, a calamitous Asian typhoon, and another Japanese earthquake—was the most expensive in history for insurers. They paid out forty-two billion dollars in disaster claims, and that was less than half the total damage sustained. In recent years, the cost of catastrophes has risen astronomically, but our ability to insure ourselves against them has hardly improved.

Catastrophes differ from the kinds of things we usually buy insurance for, and not only because they affect a lot of people. Insurance, at its core, is an actuarial business. It's about distributing risk over a large group of people, whose behavior is collectively predictable. Insurers can't predict what will happen to one person, but they know (or should know) what will happen to people in general—a certain number will get cancer, a certain number will die in head-on collisions, a certain number will live to be ninety-three. The business, grim as it is, is relatively certain, as long as you get the math right.

Catastrophes, however, are not nearly as predictable. They occur so rarely that it is difficult to discern patterns or make reliable forecasts. It's not that all natural disasters are unforeseeable—scientists have got better at forecasting hurricanes, and geologists can speculate about the likelihood of earthquakes over a long stretch of time—but there is nothing actuarial in these calculations. (The same goes for man-made catastrophes, like September 11th or Bhopal.) And the amount of damage inflicted by such disasters is even harder to predict. A tiny variation in a hurricane's path through Florida can be the difference between a few billion dollars in damage and a hundred billion dollars.



Still, insurers can make forecasts, as long as they take a much longer view and accept that the range of possible outcomes is much wider than they'd like it to be. Such acceptance doesn't come easy. In econo-speak, human beings are "ambiguity-averse." More important, they are payout-averse. Illnesses and accidents happen to individuals, one or a few at a time. Catastrophes strike multitudes, and the cost is borne at once. Most insurers tremble at the prospect of suddenly being on the hook for billions of dollars, owing to an act of God. One who doesn't is Warren Buffett. He has made a lot of money insuring catastrophes, knowing that it is in the nature of the business to have very bad years. But few insurers, or investors, have the fortitude to accept the inevitability of such big losses in exchange for the certainty of many small gains.

As a result, most insurers either charge more for catastrophe insurance than people will pay or stop writing policies altogether. After Hurrican Andrew, in 1992, insurance premiums in south Florida rose two hundred per cent. In the sixties, a host of companies left the flood-insurance business after a series of big floods in California, and after September 11th it was virtually impossible to get terrorism insurance until the federal government stepped in.

Where insurers see trouble, the insured often choose to see blue skies. Oddly, customers (that is, most of us) tend to underestimate the potential harm from catastrophes, largely because we don't think clearly about "extreme events"—events that are improbable but costly. If an event is very unlikely, people treat it as if it were impossible, especially when the time horizon is long. Give people complicated options involving serious consequences, and they often prefer not to make any decision at all: fatalism by default. That probably explains why the percentage of businesses that bought terrorism insurance once it became available was very small.

In truth, the catastrophe-insurance market is not set up to deal with catastrophe. A major earthquake in Southern California could easily cost more than two hundred billion dollars; at present, insurers are covering only half of that, yet many of them would still be done in by the claims. Someday, the financial markets may pick up the burden—you can now buy "catastrophe bonds," though the market for them is tiny—but investors would have to learn to think of disasters in much the same way they do pork bellies and the price of oil.

Maybe we're not capable of this. Insurance aside, we tend to do and spend too little in the first place to prevent (or protect ourselves from) extreme events. Richard Posner, in his new book, "Catastrophe: Risk and Response," argues that, while it may be expensive to prepare for rare events with dire consequences—a tsunami, an earth-bound asteroid—it is the reasonable thing to do. But catastrophes wouldn't be catastrophes if there was anything reasonable about them.

—*James Surowiecki*

SEYMOUR CHWAST

Shade canopy accessories Barrier strips Chalkboards Therapeutic ultrasound PIN photo diode modules Medical monitoring services Check valves Resin systems Chemical oxygen generators All-in-one touch computers Chartering cable slips Elastic bandages Wireless systems Chillers Semiconductor heat sinks Digital audio services Automotive module relays Surface mounted cabinets Rotary switches Flame retardants Pressure seal closures Electric portable air compressors Circuit breakers Automotive quality inspection equipment Solid-state components Gas discharge tube replacements Components for camcorders Panel indicators Firefighter breathing systems Heat isolation devices Climate monitoring Hazardous material protective suits Solid-state subsystems Signal magnetics Passive electronics Medical oxygen delivery Grounding connectors Telescoping sign support systems Broadband driver amplifiers Champagne glasses Drinking bottles Polymeric and porcelain surge arrestors for distribution and transmission networks Automotive power relays Garment hangers Microcoaxial assemblies Snack food packaging Aircraft wire and power cables Modem cable assemblies Industrial control switches Continuous-slot metal framing Landfill development Multi-mode radar Patch cable assemblies Shielded and coaxial cable slices Wine glasses Flame-retardant tape Range hoods Halogen-free cables for commercial and offshore applications Absorbable monofilament sutures Cable TV converters Terminals and connectors for underground networks Syringe dispensers Cordless telephone batteries Fire protection systems Tubing for outdoor furniture framing Sensor wraps Easels PIN diodes High-performance solid state relays and power controllers Wire harness tape Ceramic burners Electrical equipment for saunas Cylindrical control connectors Terminals and splices Security systems Relay sockets and accessories Arson detection Galvanized steel tubing Paperboard Counters and timers Sealed connectors Databus assemblies Television sets DC converters Subcutaneous sensors Pipe and tube products Electrical tape High pass filter inductors Pistol grip hand tool systems for IDCs Adhesive tape Segmentally welded pipe fittings USB cables Construction management Deactivators International mains adaptors Suction instruments Test equipment Steel box connectors Calibration equipment and services Plastic tumblers Cable trays Verified audio detection Thermoplastic piping systems Coaxial cable terminators Pigtail cable assemblies Waveguides Plastics engineering Institutional timekeeping Photocopiers Cabled and blind-mate power connectors High-performance connectors Safety relief valves Access floor modules Halogen-free wire Power systems Raised face flanges Connectors for high-voltage substations Flexible non-metallic conduit Reduced wall flexible metal conduit Catheters Medication nebulizers Digital metering systems Wiring harness sockets Automobile steering columns Pediatric monitoring equipment Cable design conductors Flame-retardant tubing for nuclear environments Roofto[illegible]ways Digital products Air sampling equipment Voltage wheels Customized point-of-sale receipts Digital proofing Power tool switches Chokes Medical diagnostics Sound [illegible]affic control equipment Digital visual interface products Vertical drain membranes and radiant barriers Cabinet power systems Wall track systems DIP switches Resist[illegible]hermostats Electrical transformers High-performance RF/microwave antennas Lighting for public services Video cables Thermal circuit breakers Video endoscopy [illegible]rigation pipe Heat-tracing connectors Potassium bicarbonate-based extinguishing agents Megaphone components Calculators Institutional can liners Val[illegible] Wafer gear Varactors Coaxial cables Patient monitoring cables Drop cloths Alarms for hazardous areas Power splitters Chassis components Stormwater [illegible] Card readers with web-based authentication Printer cable assemblies Engineering services Amusement machine components Disposable manual resuscitat[illegible] and gas installations Patch panels Airport lighting systems Soldering equipment Long-haul, transoceanic cable systems Entry modules Microsurgical needle[illegible]ing harness design software Automotive components Computer-assisted design services Porcelain disc insulators Flex and rigid circuits Diagnostic [illegible] Diagnostic and stress testing Landscape plastic sheeting Rechargeable car flashlights Memory card receptacles Spirometry systems Water treatment facilities [illegible] backed building and construction tapes Power magnetics Exhausters Ultraviolet disinfection systems Moisture analysis equipment Flange gaskets with bulb elasto[illegible] alloys Professional fire department hardware Custom sterilizable cable assemblies Skin effect trace systems Dental dressings and sutures Parts for lawn and garden [illegible] Tape measures Flame detectors Ribbon cables Carpet backing Parallel groove clamps Graphic arts tape Extended coverage fire sprinkler heads Hand pumps Climate control monitoring Satellite radio and digital audio systems Jacket compounds Galvanized steel armor with PVC jackets Irrigation pumps Utility cabinets Cyanoacrylate "super glue" adhesives Large-screen video projectors Eye pads Arterial extension sets Paper mill wraps Fence framework Distribution panels Continuous timers Protective breathing equipment Special purpose spiral antennas Automatic pick, place and press Power toggle switches Fiber-optic connectors Veterinary medical products Bypass valves Carbon dio[illegible] transmitters Specialty chemicals Rainfall gauges Alarms for motor vehicles Water sampling and analysis Fingerprint identification Mobile security systems Cable ties Firefig[illegible] flares Multiplier diodes Fireproof cables Drum core magnetics Audio receivers Flexible exhaust connectors Isolators and circulators Magnet wire termination machines Dual hybrid[illegible] Static measuring equipment Hand-held radios Cable management accessories Steam-tracing products Extrusion laminating Parking deck PVC-jacketed metal clad cable Factory automation cables Steelwork fixings Airport construction management Instrument winterization Cotton balls Pipe for recreational equipment Self-adhesive cable clips Multi-pair high flexibility cables Fixed cable termination adaptors Butterfly valves Portable memory Components for CD recorders and players Telemetry systems Audio production services Integrated molding/plating technology Telephone systems Safety goggles Reverse cutting sutures Decorative shields Temperature and pressure gauges Commercial-quality steel tubing Laser diodes Temperature sensors Connection droppers Dry-erase marker boards Feminine hygiene products Storage tanks Analgesics First aid kits Therm[illegible] controls Computer-assisted surgery Power modules Subminiature D connectors Front-connected sockets Digital attenuators Automated teller machine components Spring pin [illegible] probe assemblies Control panels Wet pipe sprinkler systems Alarm verification Security keypads Pain management products Helical gears Roadway and tunnel managemen[illegible]stems Printed circuit terminals Galvanized round signposts Rocker and paddle switches Microwave components Roof and gutter heating cables Arson detection Voice ampli[illegible] Fall arrest systems High-voltage connectors Power entry modules Custom broadband networks Steel threadable sprinkler pipe Accounting software Ultrasound cable ass[illegible] Protective clothing for emergency workers Flare launchers Dry pipe systems Cable tie guns Broadband amplifiers Rectangular heavy-duty connectors Discharge devices V[illegible]ion dampers Electromagnetic flow readers Laser components Advanced composites Coaxial connectors Adhesive covers Flat steel plates Elastomeric connectors Passive fibe[illegible]tic hardware Singulation systems Electrosurgical devices Coffee service kits Automotive radar sensors Electrical metallic tubing compression connectors and cou[illegible]s Intercommunication devices Customized valves Dry pipe valves Flexible hoses Curing ovens Insulated ground metal clad cables Digital satellite radio antennas Perimeter do[illegible] window protection systems Anemometers Cosmetic surgery needles Flexible non-metallic conduit Supply cylind[illegible]rm communication systems Identific[illegible] products Flexible piping equipment Rayon balls Dedicated fiber pair monitoring Hardened and tempered steel strip [illegible]in relays Interior mo[illegible] detectors Floor-mounted po[illegible] points Specialty electrodes Alcohol preps Fire sprinkler monitoring systems Thermochromic color-changing ink Food service plates Taper cutting sutures Carbon steels Fla[illegible] adaptors PVC conduit and fittings Button battery holder connectors Carbon monoxide protection Environmental data management instrument selector switches Biomed[illegible] Frequency response analyzers Thyristor surge protectors Substations Extinguishing powders Contactless position sensors Electrosurgical generators Hospital blankets Modu[illegible] and relays Terminal blocks Painter's plastic Industrial-grade trash bags Signal transducer cable harnesses DIN rail mount sockets Taper point sutures Band filters Jacketed ca[illegible] Deep-sea cable installations Computer-printable cards Mechanical connectors Attic fire sprinklers Front end rectifiers for wireless applications Sealed valves Components for str[illegible] lighting Fuel dispensing systems Gaffers tape Arterial extension sets Pipe freeze thermal controls Infrastructure antennas Flanged channel posts Intelligent fuses Cardiac blank[illegible] Battery connection cable assemblies Free-height connectors Power relays Custom-printed retail shelf labels Medical packaging Digital signage Sheet metal fabrication Oxyge[illegible] therapy products Extension cables Liquid bandages Very high-density cable interconnection assemblies Liquid chromatography systems Self-adhesive cable clips Extrusion hea[illegible] sinks Facility management Lithium batteries Hazardous chemical spill control Vandal-proof photocontrol systems HDTV antennas Inflatable [illegible] Pharmaceuticals LNA amplifiers Resettable devices Distribution compression connectors Specialty polymers Pre-amplifiers Electromechanical relays Cathodic protection Input/output cable assemblies Electrical conduit Videocassette recorder components Disinfectants Filtered modular jacks Hydrologic and hydrographic services General purpose valves PP[illegible]earn harsh environment connectors Recycling collection bins Surgical catheters Floor fixings Semiconductor switches Custom heat sinks Delineator posts Medical and surgical sponges Signature capture devices Coplanar connectors Terminal clamps Reversible hydraulic power packs Structural steel tubing for greenhouses Rheostats Germicidal ultraviolet lamps Biomedical engineering Hydraulic controls Aluminum auto parts Composite station post insulators Codeine phosphate Heavy duty starter/battery lugs and connectors Scan converters Couplers Thermal grease Helical rotor pumps Sirens Battery interconnection systems for portable electronics Light rail transportation design and [illegible]ineering Automotive semiconductor and magnetic sensors Custom-printed theatrical admission tickets Medical fluid warming systems Ratcheted crimp tools Inspection microscopes Medical temperature management Power supply distribution units Satellite cables Video endoscopy Digital transmitters Automatic sensors Greenhouse covering Signal PC board relays Microribbon connectors Abrasives Decontamination management services Flocculators Aircraft hangars Spacers and dampers Finite element analysis Definite purpose contactors Wire and cable identification systems Environmental remediation Markers Fire detection systems Aerospace engine parts Cassette recorders GPS receivers High-frequency connectors Printed circuit boards Wire wrap Extractors Residential concealed fire sprinklers Customized chemicals Telecommunications Frequency synthesizers Precision time clocks Benchtop cut-and-strip machines High-power pulsed laser diodes De-icing thermal controls Flexible steel conduit Steel lugs Energy management consulting Roadway and tunnel construction management Battery terminals Surface skimmers World's largest producer of acetaminophen Interactive video surveillance systems Memory sockets [illegible]ne-delay relays and sensors Floor plates Laser-engraved markers Water motor alarms Multipurpose filters for emission control in high-noise industrial environments Switc[illegible]ard wire identification materials Brake master cylinders Insulated lunch bags Plug valves Capacitors Institutional voice evacuation systems Twisted-pair cables Gaseous clea[illegible]ants Undersea fiber-optic telecommunications Components for DVD players Special hazard protection products Electrosurgical pencils Special shelving and partitions Holiday [illegible]ting controls Pneumatic cylinders for aluminum smelting Cartridge heaters Electronic article surveillance systems Integrated antenna systems Power transistors GPS components Components for home entertainment systems Deluge valves and accessories Perforated telescopic steel tubing Cathode ray tubes Theft, fire, and access control security systems Product disinfection Grating systems Current differential protective relays Scalpels Flood warning systems Computer-printable labels Hose racks Blind-mate hot plugs Antimicrobial dispensers Ruggedized transmitter/receiver modules Safety glasses Composite tension insulators Power cable assemblies for electrosurgical devices Aluminum conduit Skin care products Barricade support legs Electrostatic testing and coating Alkaline batteries Hospital communication systems Cable cutters Video monitors Amplitude/phase-tracking DF antennas Digital indicators Steelwork connection products Rail de-icing systems Hot-rolled steel coils Combustible gas leak detectors Fiberglass support systems and fasteners Shingle and roof underlayments Pitchers Backup power during blackouts Residential and commercial awning framework Aircraft power systems Transmission line arrestors Edge emitting LEDs Gigabit cables Hypodermic syringes Epoxies Firefighting axes Ultrasonic surgical systems Clean room equipment Ice cream sealing wraps Flex film systems Space-qualified components Airport runways and terminals Overvoltage protective relays Identification labeling Water treatment for irrigation Switch mode power magnetics Supermarket packaging Actuation products Premises cabling Attic fire sprinklers High-speed radio frequency circuits Induction loop amplifiers Liquid crystal displ[illegible] pipe Lasers Bonded heatsink assemblies Patchcords Heat detectors Resin-reinforced fiberglass tubing Custom power magnetics Electronic chemicals Delineator posts Sin[illegible] heat shrink tubing Air filtration Digital video management systems Food bags Surface wave touchscreens Bacteria filters Dry pipe fire sprinkler valves Wash presses Lightning [illegible]ctors High-power transistor modules Carbon and silver pastes Flat face flanges Geotextiles Laser-based sensors Insulation jackets Recording charts and markers Steel [illegible]ng for automotive components and fi[illegible] Welding branch outlets Composite wire Gaskets Automotive twin pack relays Multi-conductor network cables Travel mugs Boiler t[illegible]ents Mobile phone interconnections Spark suppressor housings Coated fabrics Forestry tools GPS antennas Internal storage interconnects Reprographics Electrical meta[illegible]ing Telecom and signal relays Weatherproof [illegible] Portable oxygen units Intrusion alarm detection devices Lighting cable Floodlights for high-security areas Intuitive ala[illegible] Modulators Joysticks Barricade tapes Counters and timers Electronic crowd controlling queue systems Fire hose reel cabinets Keypads Double and quad-ridge wavegu[illegible] Laboratory benches Aerospace ground power and industrial high-performance contactors Extreme temperature flexible metal conduit High speed RF modules Circuit [illegible] devices Heavy-duty commercial applicators IF amplifiers Automobile battery disconnect switch relays Lecterns and podiums Fabric maintenance Harness adapters Low [illegible]

WE MAKE THOUSANDS OF PRODUCTS THAT AREN'T SIMPLY IMPORTANT. THEY'RE VITAL.

At Tyco International we make more than 200,000 products for hundreds of different industries. Tyco's Earth Tech is a global leader in the water, environmental, transportation, and facilities markets. From drinking water to automotive components to emergency room supplies, the things we do aren't simply important. They're vital.

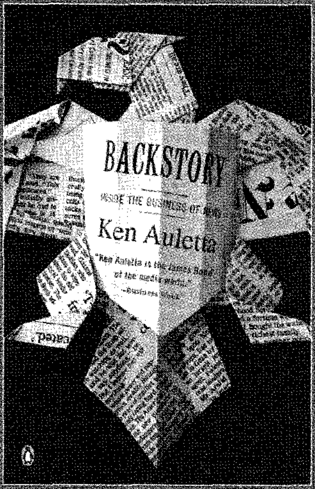
tyco
a vital part of your world

ELECTRONICS ENGINEERED PRODUCTS & SERVICES FIRE & SECURITY HEALTHCARE PLASTICS & ADHESIVES www.tyco.com

advertisement

The New Yorker Promotion Department invites you to look for this release.

bookmarks



"Ken Auletta is the James Bond of the media world."
—*Business Week*

"As up-to-date as a cable news banner, *Backstory* is an invaluable guide to the most important players in our information age."
—Walter Cronkite

"Auletta skillfully shows ... how serving the synergy gods faster-louder-richer can blunt the tools for understanding that journalism at its best provides."
—*The Washington Post*

Read an excerpt of *Backstory* at **www.penguin.com**

Penguin Books
A Member of Penguin Group (USA)

ANNALS OF MEDICINE

THE PEDIATRIC GAP

Why have most medications never been properly tested on kids?

BY JEROME GROOPMAN

Not long ago, a three-year-old boy fell off a jungle gym in Boston and lacerated his cheek. His parents rushed him to the emergency room of a nearby hospital. A nurse restrained the screaming boy while a surgeon cleaned his cheek and injected it with a small dose of bupivacaine, a local anesthetic that is widely used in adults. When the surgeon began to suture the wound, the child had a seizure and his blood pressure suddenly dropped; he was on the verge of going into shock. He was transferred to the intensive-care unit, where doctors tried to account for his symptoms. A CAT scan taken to see if the fall had caused cerebral hemorrhage showed no evidence of brain damage.

Maureen Strafford, a pediatric anesthesiologist and cardiologist, was paged to assist, and she found that the level of bupivacaine in the boy's blood was perilously high. The boy was intubated and placed on a respirator. He spent several days in intensive care before recovering from the overdose.

The package insert for bupivacaine does not provide specific dosing information for children; the E.R. surgeon had adjusted for the boy's weight by "dosing down" from the amount recommended for adults. But such extrapolations cannot account for the differences in the biology of children. Even growing teen-agers who weigh as much as adults tend to absorb and metabolize medicine more quickly than adults, since organs that break down drugs, such as the liver, or excrete chemicals, such as the kidneys, take years to mature. The rate of blood flow to the skin and lungs is also higher in children, so topical or inhaled agents may be more rapidly absorbed.

Strafford told me that the surgeon's decision to improvise with bupivacaine was not unusual. Although the Food and Drug Administration has long required that medications be screened for safety in adults, approximately seventy-five per cent of drugs approved for use in the United States have never been subjected to comprehensive pediatric studies. A physician, however, is allowed to use any F.D.A.-approved drug in whatever way he deems beneficial, and he isn't required to inform parents if it hasn't been specifically tested on children. There is no single official repository of information about how to calibrate drug dosages for children. Since pharmaceutical companies rarely collect data about the effects of their drugs on minors, there is scant information about pediatric dosing in the Physicians' Desk Reference, a compendium of guidelines and warnings supplied by drug companies; pediatric handbooks are published by private companies, but they are not comprehensive and their data are not obtained through a consistent methodology. In the absence of reliable information, doctors are frequently forced to engage in guesswork when administering drugs. Speaking of the three-year-old boy, Strafford said, "This is a perfect example of what can happen to a healthy kid."

I recently spoke with Ellis Neufeld, a pediatric hematologist at Children's Hospital Boston, who has begun to document the different ways children react to Lovenox, an anticoagulant that has been safely used in adults. A teen-ager at the hospital, he said, had recently developed a severe brain hemorrhage after taking the drug; emergency neurosurgery was required to save his life. This spring, Neufeld completed a preliminary study of thirty children who had been placed on closely monitored regimens of Lovenox. The findings helped him formulate a set of target doses in pediatric patients, adjusting for variables such as kidney function. (In very young children, the renal system is not fully developed.) His results will be ready for publication in several months. In Neufeld's view, such a study should have been required by the F.D.A. before Lovenox was approved for use in children. "The package insert from the drug company does not provide a doctor with what he needs to know," he said. Under the rubric "Pediatric Use," the insert merely states, "Safety and effectiveness of Lovenox Injection in pediatric patients have not been established."

Children with certain illnesses can be especially sensitive to the side effects of a drug. For example, infants with meningitis are much more likely than adults to react poorly to chloramphenicol, an antibiotic that is a common medication for the disease; newborns, especially premature babies, do not have the necessary enzyme in the liver to metabolize the drug. Symptoms such as vomiting, refusal to suck on a breast or a bottle, and diarrhea usually appear two to nine days after the initial treatment. When chloramphenicol accumulates at toxic levels, blood pressure drops precipitately, and the lack of oxygen in the blood causes the baby's lips and skin to take on a bluish tint. Ultimately, body temperature plummets and the baby turns ashen. "Gray-baby syndrome" can be fatal unless the infant receives a blood transfusion.

Although pediatricians have trained themselves to be particularly careful when administering drugs, the risk of grave harm is still too high. One popular drug that was discovered to be especially dangerous to children is propofol, a sedative that has consistently proved safe in adults. During the early nineteen-nineties in England, there were several reports of children who died after receiving propofol during I.C.U. sedation; in 1992, the British government recommended against using it on patients under sixteen. In the United States, however, propofol continued to be used widely in pediatric I.C.U.s. As it turned out, some children in intensive care who had been administered propofol developed a potentially lethal buildup of acid in the blood. Finally, in 2001, AstraZeneca Pharmaceuticals, the company that created the drug, sent out a letter to American physicians disclosing the results of a pediatric trial: of two hundred and twenty-two young patients in intensive care who were given propofol, twenty-one died; only four of the hundred and five patients given standard sedatives died. In other words, the death rate of children taking propofol was two and a half times higher. The F.D.A. eventually added a new warning inside packages of the drug, contraindicating its use among youths; it remains legal, however, for doctors to administer propofol to children.

A drug that has proved safe for adults can harm a child.

PHILIPPE PETIT-ROULET

Pediatricians sometimes adopt extraordinary measures to insure that their patients are not harmed by treatments that have not been adequately studied in children. Ben Mizell, the former medical director of the Infant Unit at Primary Children's Medical Center, in Salt Lake City, told me that he often resorted to painful procedures—such as the placement of a catheter into the bloodstream—so that he could carefully monitor the level of a drug in an infant's blood. At other times, he used outdated drugs, because he lacked data on the pediatric safety of more modern medicines. When he did prescribe a new antibiotic, he said, "we did so with the caveat that only God knows what is going to happen." Mizell described how difficult it was to explain to families that many of the treatments their infants received were being administered without sufficient knowledge. "As soon as you admit your ignorance, parents lose faith in your ability to help," he said.

With some common pediatric illnesses, doctors have essentially no choice but to administer unscreened medication. Asthma is a particular problem. Michael Shannon, the director of the Children's Hospital Boston emergency room and an expert on pediatric toxicology, told me, "We don't know the safe limits of dose and frequency of modern inhaled asthma drugs like albuterol, and so when we give children inhalants we sometimes make them sick." Moreover, no intravenous asthma drug has been comprehensively tested on children. One such medication, intravenous terbutaline, "is fairly ineffective, and, frankly, it can be toxic," Shannon said. "It can cause a rapid heart rate as well as high blood pressure or injury to the heart. We need to be able to use better treatments on kids."

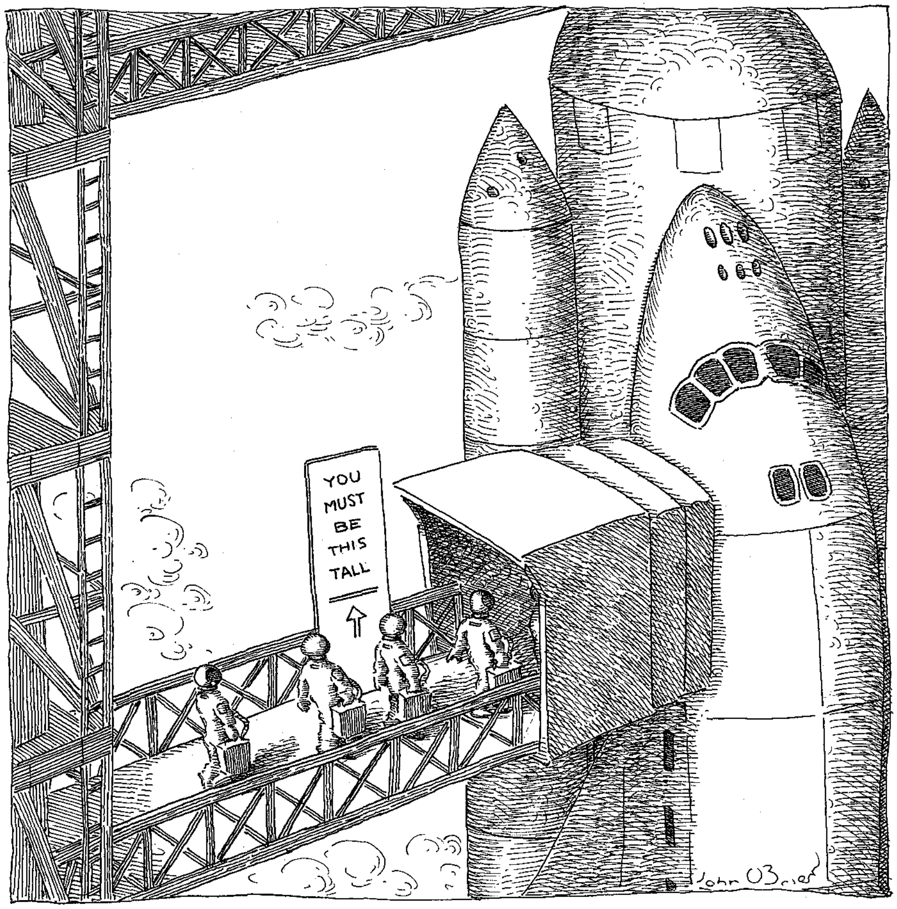
Several years ago, Shannon conducted his own pediatric trial of a common adult asthma therapy, intravenous magnesium, versus a placebo. His clinical fellow recently finished another. "They're the only placebo-controlled trials that I know of in the literature for moderate childhood asthma," he said. Shannon and his colleague donated the time they spent on the studies, and Shannon drew on discretionary funds from the hospital to pay for blood tests. Preliminary results from the studies suggest that the therapy is safe for children.

In recent years, federal legislation has sought to give pharmaceutical firms financial incentives to pay for clinical studies targeted to children. Since 1997, a company that agrees to set up a pediatric trial to screen a new drug has received a six-month extension of market exclusivity for the medication. Yet such reforms don't address the larger problem of old drugs that have never been tested on children. Children's health advocates also complain that the F.D.A. does not require manufacturers of medical devices to create variants that are designed for children; consequently, pediatric surgeons and cardiologists must perform procedures on children using equipment that was developed for adults. "It's what I call the reverse lifeboat phenomenon," Maureen Strafford told me. "In medicine, children come last."

Testing drugs on children used to be a priority. Stuart Siegel, a pediatric hematologist-oncologist and the director of the Children's Center for Cancer and Blood Diseases at Children's Hospital Los Angeles, told me that in the nineteen-fifties and sixties children with cancer were typically given experimental drugs before adults. The logic was that sick children deserved to be the first to receive the latest treatments. These days, the situation is often reversed; important new therapies—for example, Gleevec and Avastin—have been tested on adults first. Siegel attributes this shift to "an ethical change in society." Doctors and parents are increasingly concerned about whether children can truly give informed consent to participate in potentially harmful research. Drug companies have equally strong misgivings; they fear legal liability and negative publicity. If a child dies during a clinical study and the parents sue, jury awards can be very high.

"I've had discussions with some leaders in the pharmaceutical industry," Siegel said. "The feedback is consistent. They'll cite the cost and then they'll also cite the risk, in terms of an adverse event and what that would do to their profits and their stock."

Indeed, Eli Lilly and Company recently received a tremendous amount of bad press when Traci Johnson, an Indiana college student, committed suicide during a clinical trial of Cymbalta, an antidepressant. She had initially been given high doses of Cymbalta, but a few days before her death she had been switched to a placebo. Scientists have found that hallucinations and paranoid delusions can occur when a patient is in withdrawal from an antidepressant. A spokesman for Lilly has stated that it is unclear what led to the girl's suicide; the F.D.A. officially cleared the company of wrongdoing and approved the drug.


YOU MUST BE THIS TALL
↑
John O'Brien

Johnson's death occurred at the same time that the F.D.A. was analyzing a large set of data compiled from multiple clinical trials. The results, which were released in October, indicated that twice as many children taking antidepressants in clinical trials considered or attempted suicide as children taking placebos. The agency will require pharmacists to include a warning, to be released later this month, that cites this study when dispensing packages of antidepressants. Although antidepressants can still be legally administered to children, the children must now be stringently monitored by doctors.

One reason the F.D.A. was slow to identify this danger, critics say, is that individual clinical trials sponsored by drug companies involved small numbers of children. (The more subjects involved in a study, the costlier it is.) Pfizer's pediatric studies of Zoloft, for example, involved fewer than four hundred children; according to Lawrence Scahill, a researcher in pediatric psychopharmacology at the Yale Child Study Center, thousands of depressed children would need to be studied before researchers could pinpoint a subtle difference in behavior, such as increased suicidal thoughts. The F.D.A. extended Pfizer's patent on Zoloft for six months because it conducted the trial, which will allow it to reap hundreds of millions of dollars in added revenue.

Although the precise biological differences between adult depression and childhood depression are not yet known, there is reason to believe that the maladies are not identical, and that antidepressants may work differently on a developing brain. Harold S. Koplewicz, the director of the New York University Child Study Center, told me that few children or teen-agers exhibit the classic symptoms of adult depression: insomnia, sadness, passivity, loss of libido, and loss of appetite. Rather, they often oversleep, overeat, and feel irritable and aggressive. "There are revolutionary changes in the brain that begin around age thirteen and end around twenty-five," Koplewicz said. "In terms of neural pathways, country roads become superhighways." He theorizes that, in some children, these tumultuous brain changes lead to depression. Koplewicz believes that some antidepressants can help teen-agers, but cautions that young people's brains may be more sensitive to daily fluctuations in drug levels, and that these pharmacological changes themselves may foster destructive thoughts and behavior.

In the late nineteen-eighties, Britain's medical regulatory agency began closely monitoring anecdotal reports of suicidal behavior and withdrawal symptoms related to one class of antidepressants, selective serotonin re-uptake inhibitors (S.S.R.I.s). Warnings were issued by the British government about the potential dangers of these drugs in 1993 and 2000. In June, 2003, the agency convened an emergency meeting to review pediatric trial data on Seroxat, an S.S.R.I. known in the United States as Paxil, and concluded that the drug should not be prescribed for minors. By the end of that year, the British government had banned doctors from giving five other S.S.R.I.s to children. Ten more months passed before the F.D.A. took similar action on children and antidepressants.

In 2003, Congress passed legislation that codified what is known as the Pediatric Rule. A drug company working on a new treatment for a disease that affects both adults and children is now required to conduct pediatric studies. (The rule does not slow the process of approving new drugs for adult use.) To make this regulation palatable, the F.D.A. continues to offer a six-month extension of market exclusivity for drug companies that perform pediatric studies.

Children's health advocates, who had fought for years to help pass this legislation, were dismayed to discover that there were significant loopholes in the 2003 law, as well as in other recent reforms. For example, Congress did not set a timetable for the completion of pediatric studies. Moreover, the reforms include a "sunset clause" that will cause them to expire in 2007. (This clause was added as a result of pressure from drug companies and groups that oppose government regulation.) Advocates worry that many drug companies will exploit the clause by agreeing to conduct a trial but allowing the study to languish until 2007, when a different Congress may decline to renew the reforms.

An even greater oversight of the congressional reforms is that they do not adequately address the potential dangers of generic drugs. A list of medications for which pediatric studies are urgently needed is published annually in the Federal Register. The 2004 list includes twenty-five drugs that are prescribed for children hundreds of thousands of times each year—drugs such as rifampin, an antibiotic that combats tuberculosis and staph infections, and furosemide, a common diuretic. Another drug on the list, the sedative ketamine, has sometimes caused children to stop breathing. There are insufficient data, however, to suggest why this occurs—and whether a different dosing regimen might be safer.

The National Institutes of Health has begun to commission pediatric studies of the generic drugs on the Federal Register list, but it has not been given any additional funds for this urgent task. The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development estimates that it costs, on average, five to ten million dollars to do a comprehensive pediatric study of a drug. By diverting funds from other programs, the N.I.H. has begun studies of only two of the twenty-five drugs on the Federal Register list.

While children's advocates are working to fill the gaps in the congressional reforms, Sam Kazman, the general counsel for the Competitive Enterprise Institute, a Washington-based libertarian group that lobbied against the Pediatric Rule, would like to see the laws overturned. (Five per cent of the institute's annual budget comes from donations from pharmaceutical companies.) Kazman worries that requiring pediatric clinical trials on drugs will open the door to other "special groups"—such as pregnant women, the elderly, and immune-compromised patients. Each group may experience different effects from a particular drug, and requiring safety and efficacy data on each one, he told me, would further increase the costs of drug discovery and discourage new research. "These factors can tip against going forward with new drug development," he said. "It can take more than ten years and hundreds of millions of dollars to develop a drug. Placing unnecessary regulatory burdens on pharmaceutical companies only adds to their costs."

Dr. Charles Coté, a pediatric anesthesiologist and an expert on pediatric drug trials, said that some pharmaceutical companies had gone to great lengths to lower the costs of studies in children. Typically, in clinical trials on adults, a company first studies how different doses of a drug are absorbed and metabolized. The company then performs a second set of studies to determine if the drug is effective. In many recent pediatric studies, these two steps have been combined in order to cut costs. This approach requires each child involved in the study to participate for a long period of time—but, because few children have extended stays in the hospital, enrollment is often poor. "A drug company can satisfy the law without generating meaningful data about how to prescribe its drug for children," Coté said. In his view, the congressional reforms did not go far enough. "We need to require more rigorous studies, to make sure that these drugs are safe for children."

The F.D.A.'s method of monitoring drugs after they appear on the market is also flawed. Dianne Murphy, who is in charge of the F.D.A.'s Office of Pediatric Therapeutics, recently told me that the agency's approach is essentially "a passive process." Once a drug is approved for use, the F.D.A. tracks adverse reactions to medications by culling voluntary reports from patients and doctors, through a program known as MedWatch. Pediatricians, however, are often overwhelmed with paperwork for insurance companies and must carry large patient loads in order to sustain their practices; few find the time to fill out MedWatch forms. France and Britain, by contrast, have aggressive post-market surveillance programs that are more effective at getting hospitals to report drug mishaps. In the wake of the recent scandal surrounding Vioxx—a painkiller that was approved by the F.D.A. in 1999, yet turned out to cause serious heart problems—the F.D.A. is under pressure to revamp its method for tracking adverse reactions. Reform of this system will especially benefit children. Since the number of children taking a certain drug is small (relative to the adult population), it is particularly hard to detect a pattern of adverse reactions; without proper vigilance, the dangers of a drug like Paxil, for instance, can go unnoticed for years.

Last March, a woman in her twenty-fourth week of pregnancy came to Boston in the hope that a cardiac procedure would allow her fetus, which had a malformed heart, to survive after birth. The organ was about twenty millimetres wide. Owing to problems during gestation, the blood flow between the left atrium and the right atrium was poor; if the problem was left unattended, the baby would likely die soon after being born. The aim of the operation was to enlarge a one-millimetre hole that connected the two chambers, allowing for free blood flow. The best way to do this would be to insert a catheter with an inflatable balloon into the hole at a ninety-degree angle. But no company had ever designed a catheter for children—let alone fetuses—so the team would have to use an adult catheter, which is large and cumbersome.

Two monitors in the room projected ultrasound images of the fetus. James Lock, the chief of cardiology at Children's Hospital Boston, stood by the table. A fuzzy gray-and-black outline of limbs and torso filled the screen. Wayne Tworetzky, a pediatric cardiologist, focussed the ultrasound probe on the fetal heart. It appeared as a delicate, pulsing circle. Bursts of red and blue indicated the distorted path of blood circulation through the heart and lungs.

Louise Wilkins-Haug, an obstetrician, began to press the left side of the mother's abdomen.

"That looks good," Tworetzky said. "The baby's chest is now facing outward."

"How big is the right atrium?" Lock, the cardiologist, asked.

"Six millimetres," Tworetzky answered.

A sharp white line appeared on the screen. Wilkins-Haug was advancing a metal cannula, or tube, with a needle at its tip toward the baby's heart. "The needle tip is too high," Lock warned her. "You'll blow up the back wall of the heart! Readjust." Wilkins-Haug moved the cannula; a deviation of even a few millimetres could tear the tissue of the cardiac chambers and kill the fetus.

There was a flash of white light on the screen as the needle punctured the heart wall with a tiny hole. Lock then inserted a catheter through the cannula. "Blow up the balloon," Lock instructed. The balloon would expand the hole, increasing blood flow.

Suddenly, Lock yelled, "Shit!" The balloon had ruptured in the left atrium, which meant that they could not inflate it twice, to maximize the size of the hole. The balloon, too, had been designed for an adult. Moreover, the catheter was so unwieldy and inflexible that the physicians' approach to the septum was thirty degrees short of the optimal angle.

Despite the problems, bursts of red and blue appeared on the screen to indicate that blood circulation had been increased. There was a better chance that the baby would live.

A few days after the operation, I met with Lock, who is an expert in interventional cardiology—the use of devices to fix heart problems. "We have to show we can make this work with the wrong equipment, and then convince someone to make us the right equipment," Lock explained. He told me that the first device he tried to create for children was an instrument to open a stenosis, or closure, of two portals to the heart: the aortic and the mitral valves. If Lock could dilate these valves using a tiny catheter, a child with the condition could avoid open-heart surgery. He went to Boston Scientific Corporation, a prominent medical-device manufacturer. The company suggested that he use a catheter designed to open a small artery in the abdomen of an adult. "They told me there wasn't a market," he recalled. So, for three years, Lock used the abdominal catheter to open the aortic and mitral valves of adults. This was relatively successful, and Boston Scientific, convinced that there was an adult market, agreed to make an aortic-and-mitral-valve catheter—for adults. "As an act of charity only, they made a few pediatric-shaped catheters," Lock said. "It's unlikely that we would ever have got the pediatric catheters built if there hadn't been an adult market—which we had to invent."

The operation I had witnessed, Lock said, would be much safer if he had the right equipment. "What do I need?" he asked rhetorically. "It's not very complicated. I need somebody to put a bend on this catheter. You want it to be shaped

REFUSING HEAVEN

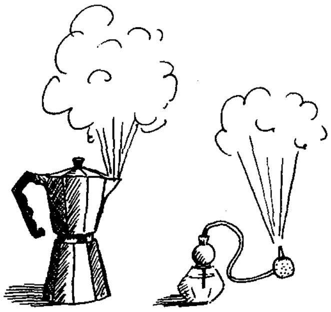
The old women in black at early Mass in winter
are a problem for him. He could tell by their eyes
they have seen Christ. They make the kernel
of his being and the clarity around it
seem meagre, as though he needs girders
to hold up his unusable soul. But he chooses
against the Lord. He will not abandon his life.
Not his childhood, not the ninety-two bridges
across the two rivers of his youth. Nor the mills
along the banks where he became a young man
as he worked. The mills are eaten away, and eaten
again by the sun and its rusting. He needs them
even though they are gone, to measure against.
The silver is worn down to the brass underneath
and is the better for it. He will gauge
by the smell of concrete sidewalks after night rain.
He is like an old ferry dragged on to the shore,
a home in its smashed grandeur, with the giant beams
and joists. Like a wooden ocean out of control.
A beached heart. A cauldron of cooling melt.

—*Jack Gilbert*

like a hockey stick on the tip so if I'm at the wrong angle I can just rotate it." He showed me a prototype of the specialized catheter, which he had made himself. "You see, I can turn it," he said.

Although only fifty to a hundred babies a year require the surgery that I had observed, Lock said, he and his colleagues at the hospital believe that the hockey-stick cannula could be used in a variety of pediatric procedures. An obstruction in a baby's bile duct could be readily opened using such an instrument. Anesthesia could be delivered to a hard-to-reach part of a child's body, like the nerves in the shoulder. Rusty Jennings, a fetal surgeon at the hospital, told me that hundreds of babies are born each year with a malformation at the base of the bladder which results in kidney failure. If this bladder abnormality could be repaired before birth—a procedure for which Lock's cannula might be an ideal tool—the kidneys would be spared. "Many thousands of children could benefit from this invention," Lock told me. Still, he had great difficulty convincing a company to take on the project and devote its own resources to manufacturing the device. As a last resort, Lock gave away the patent for his device to a small start-up company, ATC, and Children's Hospital Boston is paying ATC for much of the research and development costs.

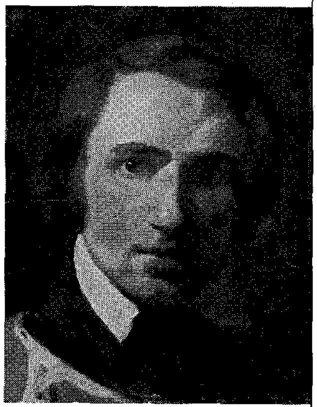
It seems unlikely that either private industry or the government will ever take the initiative in creating therapies specifically designed for children. As a result, some hospitals are trying to help close the pediatric gap by setting up their own research-and-development divisions. In 2003, Children's Hospital Boston started the Pediatric Product Development Initiative. First, the hospital interviews the clinical staff about medical gaps that need to be filled. If a pediatrician says, for example, that he needs a certain drug reformulated into a liquid palatable to babies, the hospital funds research to determine how this might be accomplished. If a specific device is needed, the hospital brings in engineers to determine the feasibility of producing it; once it is deemed practical, the hospital offers the idea to a private company.



One prototype that the program has developed is that of a milk bottle designed for premature infants who are unable to coördinate sucking and swallowing, causing food to enter their lungs. This "active bottle" has a series of sensors that can detect whether the infant has learned the necessary skills. Children's Hospital also has prototypes for a pillow for babies with misshapen heads, to keep them from sleeping always on one side.

In the meantime, pediatricians are faced with urgent clinical problems. Recently, at Children's Hospital Boston, there was an outbreak of an unusual bacterium called *B. dolosa* among patients with cystic fibrosis. Thirty-six of the four hundred and fifty patients with cystic fibrosis are known to be infected with the microbe. Craig Gerard, who is the chief of pulmonary medicine and a professor of pediatrics at Harvard Medical School, and who oversees these young patients, told me that lung function gradually declines in patients who suffer from cystic fibrosis, but in those carrying *B. dolosa* breathing can become severely impaired. There is no clearly effective therapy for the microbe, which does not appear to be a threat to healthy children or adults. One death has already been attributed to sepsis, and there are six other cases in which Gerard believes the microbe may have been a contributing factor. Yet there is little chance that a pharmaceutical company would develop a drug to target an unusual microbe like *B. dolosa*, which is not widespread enough to make such a drug profitable.

Acknowledging that this problem is outside "the great maw of the pharmaceutical industry," Gerard has decided that the only solution is for Children's Hospital to develop its own pediatric drugs. "We are going to try to make a designer antibiotic," he said. Gerard and his collaborators at Harvard are using charitable funds to decode the genome of *B. dolosa*. "We can't wait for the economics to drive this," he said. ♦



SWANN AUCTIONS

Theodore Gericault, **Portrait Study of a Young Man,** oil on paper, circa 1810-20. Estimate $30,000 to $50,000. **At auction Jan 24.**

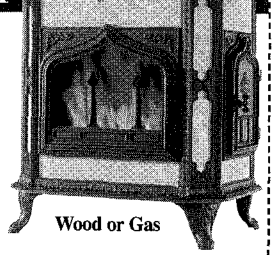
Thur Jan 13 10:30am **Discovery Sale Works on Paper**
Catalogue: $15
Inquiries: Christine Berlane, ext 28
cberlane@swanngalleries.com

Mon Jan 24 2:30pm **Old Master Drawings with a Selection of Rembrandt Etchings**
Illustrated Catalogue: $35
Inquiries: Todd Weyman, ext 32
tweyman@swanngalleries.com

Complete schedule and catalogues online at www.swanngalleries.com

AUTOGRAPHS
BOOKS/MANUSCRIPTS
MAPS/ATLASES
PHOTOGRAPHS
POSTERS
WORKS OF ART ON PAPER

Swann Galleries, Inc.
104 East 25th Street
New York, NY 10010
212 254 4710
Fax: 212 979 1017



Radiant Soapstone Warmth

Soapstone is nature's perfect stove material – beautiful, durable, and efficient. It heats steadily and comfortably - day after day, night after night. No power required. Free catalog.

Wood or Gas

Woodstock Soapstone Company, Inc.
66 Airpark Rd, Dept. 1978, W. Lebanon NH 03784

www.woodstove.com
1-888-664-8188

AFRICA ◆ CHINA ◆ INDIA ◆ JAPAN ◆ NEPAL ◆ SRI LANKA ◆ TAIWAN

Since 1989

UPTON TEA IMPORTS

Purveyor of the World's Finest Teas

1-800-234-8327
www.uptontea.com

Free catalog listing over 380 varieties of garden-fresh, loose tea

34-A Hayden Rowe St. Hopkinton, MA 01748

Parenting Support By Phone

Media Parenting Expert
207-332-6679

WorldParenting.com

SHOUTS & MURMURS

AIR POCKETS

BY BRUCE McCALL

Dear Full-Fare Passenger Only,

This is the last edition of *Air Pockets* in its current form. With the next issue, our in-flight magazine will appear as a lively, fascinating, and informative paragraph on the back of your boarding pass. And it's yours to take with you.

As this airline's new chairman, I have the pleasure of announcing a host of other passenger-related initiatives inspired by our merger with the Fifteenth Circuit Bankruptcy Court:

—Baggage check-in and pickup at the luggage carrousel are now two separate cash-pay opportunities.

—Lavatory Class, a low-cost alternative featuring aisle-free seating and almost unrestricted rest-room privileges.

—SkyBump, our pioneering new in-flight fare-hike program.

—On landing, if you haven't finished sucking your complimentary throat lozenge, please stick it on the armrest for the next passenger.

—Try our groundbreaking new In-Flight Meal Insurance: pay a small fee and you won't be served an in-flight meal.

—Membership in our After-Dark Club entitles you to use of a flashlight, for reading and avoiding nasty tumbles in the aisle.

On top of all this, our fleet's recent switch to Liberian registry means no more cumbersome seat belts, life vests, or oxygen masks and an end to those boring pre-flight demonstrations. Jittery fliers needn't worry, though; they can join our exclusive Survivors' Club and rent a personal Air Troubleshooter Kit (fire-extinguisher deposit extra).

Spiralling senior-airline-executive compensation costs have challenged us to find ways of effectively boosting revenues while lowering service levels. By cinching the money belt even tighter, we have found that we can better serve the most important people of all: our shareholders. Accordingly, new profit requirements dictate that children under five be carried in the overhead compartments on all flights. Remember: deposit ten dollars in nickels and set the time lock *before* bolting the compartment door shut. And, on the ground, we've simplified procedures dramatically, eliminating pre-flight passenger check-in service and seat selection. With our new AirSprint feature, all ticketed passengers in the departure lounge are invited to race for the jetway when the buzzer sounds. Passengers will be reassured to know that costly counter personnel have been transferred to such urgent duties as siphoning gas from cars in the parking lot to fuel our air fleet and filling in for those unionized flight mechanics who are always calling in sick.

LAURIE ROSENWALD

I am also happy to report that our flight schedules are being continuously overhauled to minimize passenger convenience and to help our board members travel more easily to their favorite resorts and spas. For example, Santa Barbara has been added to our non-stop Nantucket–Hobe Sound–Nice–Columbus, Ohio route. Next spring will mark the inauguration of our non-stop annual Sioux Falls–Beijing Flight No. 0. (Return flights are in the advanced let's-consider-it stage.) And, as you know, we have just announced new partnerships with BulgAir, ParaguAir, and Air Eire, insuring that international travellers will have the opportunity to change planes three times on even the shortest routes. With the recent leasing of our hub to Wal-Mart, ours is now the world's first true "all-spoke" airline.

On a final note, immediately after your aircraft took off today the International Brotherhood of Airport Runway Pavers, Scrapers, and Stripers declared a wildcat strike against this airline, and therefore your plane cannot land at any airport in North America. Be assured that management will continue to bargain in good faith while seeking alternative landing sites in the nearest friendly country—but we cannot and will not be blackmailed by exorbitant landing fees that make a mockery of our policy of fiscal restraint. So please stow all loose articles and bring your seat to the full upright position. ♦

Advertisement

WE HAVE A GIFT FOR GOOD IDEAS

THE NEW YORKER
MARKETPLACE

newyorkermarketplace.com

The New Yorker's unique advertisers are now online. With one stop, you can learn more about all your favorites—and discover something unexpected. From Tuscan villas to Tucson artisans, new spa treatments to antiquarian books—New Yorker Marketplace offers a world of uncommon and original items for you and the ones you love.

Visit The New Yorker Marketplace today.

Apparel
Arts & Collectibles
Books & Music
Doctors & Health
Gifts
Home
Jewelry
Kids
Personal Enhancement
Real Estate
Travel

newyorkermarketplace.com

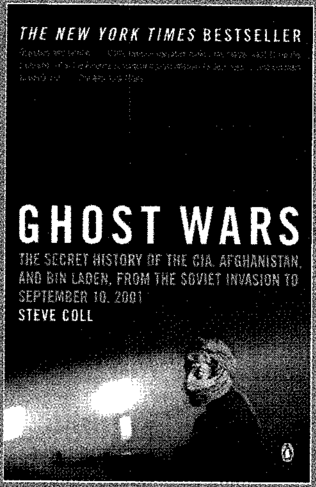
Where good ideas click

©2004 by The Condé Nast Publications, Inc. All rights reserved.

advertisement

The New Yorker Promotion
Department invites you to
look for this release.

bookmarks



THE NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

GHOST WARS

THE SECRET HISTORY OF THE CIA, AFGHANISTAN, AND BIN LADEN, FROM THE SOVIET INVASION TO SEPTEMBER 10, 2001

STEVE COLL

"Objective and terrific ... the finest historical narrative so far on the origins of al Qaeda."
—James Risen,
The New York Times Book Review

"A well-written, authoritative, high-altitude drama with few heroes, many villains, bags of cash, and a tragic ending—one that may not have been inevitable."
—James Bamford,
The Washington Post

"An inside account written by an outsider, the most objective history I have read of the many failures of the CIA and the U.S. government in the region."
—Ahmed Rashid,
The New York Times Book Review

Read an excerpt of *Ghost Wars* at **www.penguin.com**

Penguin Books
A Member of Penguin Group (USA)

PERSONAL HISTORY

OUT OF OHIO

Leaving home.

BY IAN FRAZIER

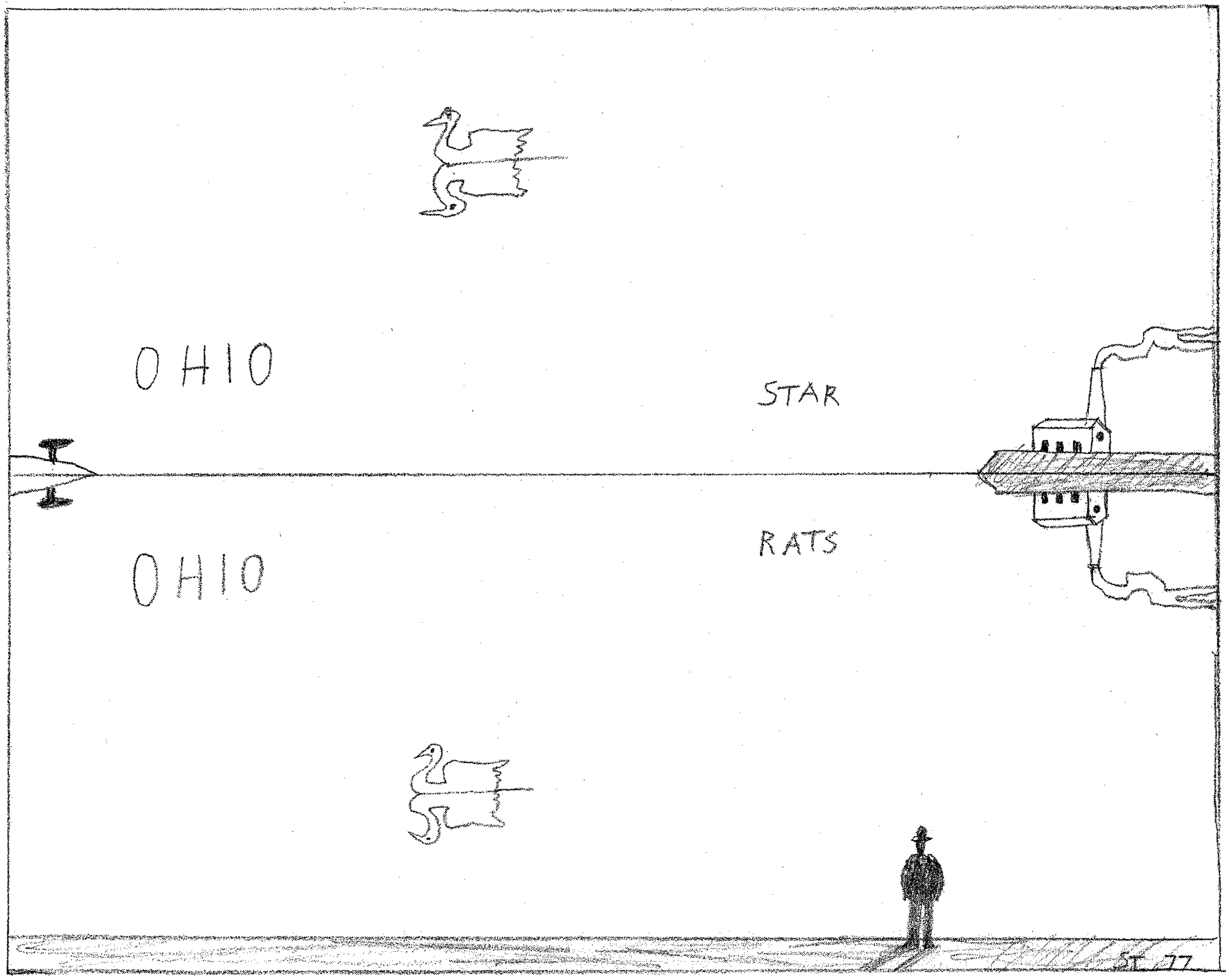
Recently I saw in a newspaper from Hudson, Ohio, my home town, that they were about to tear down the town's water tower. In principle, I don't care anymore how things I used to love about Hudson change or disappear. Each time a big change happens, though, I feel a moment of resistance before my lack of caring returns. The town's water tower, built in the early nineteen-hundreds, was its civic reference point, as its several white church steeples were its spiritual ones. The water tower was higher than they, and whenever you were walking in the fields—the town was surrounded by fields—you could scan the horizon for the water tower just above the tree line and know where you were. The cone-shaped top, and the cylindrical tank below it, gave the water tower the aspect of an old-time spaceship, though more squat. Its dull silver color and the prominent rivets in its sheet-metal side added to the antique Buck Rogers look. Or, to switch movies, the tower looked like the Tin Man in "The Wizard of Oz." Two generations ago, water towers like this one could be found superintending small towns all over the Midwest and West. I'm sure the Tin Man was even based on them.

I lived in Hudson from when I was six until I was eighteen. Sometimes I try, usually without success, to describe how sweet it was to grow up in a small Ohio town forty years ago. As I get into the details, corniness tinges my voice, and a proprietary sentimentality that puts people off. I say the names of my friends from back then—Kent, Jimmy (called Dog), Susie, Bitsy, Kathy, Charlie (called Dunkie), Timmy, Paul—and they sound somehow wrong. They're like the names of characters in nostalgic mid-American movies or Bruce Springsteen songs, and I start to think of us as that myself, and a blurring sameness sets in, and the whole business defeats me. But then a friend from Hudson calls, or I run into somebody from there, or I hear the rattle of shopping-cart wheels in a supermarket parking lot, and for a second I remember how growing up in Hudson could be completely, even unfairly, sweet.

Most modern people don't belong anyplace as intimately as we belonged to Hudson. Now the town has grown and merged with northern Ohio exurbia, so it's hardly recognizable for what it was. Some of the old sense of belonging, though, remains. A while ago, I went back for a funeral. I took the bus from New York City to Cleveland overnight and then drove down to Hudson in the morning with my brother. We walked into Christ Church, our old church, now unfamiliar because of remodelling, and sat in the back. I saw not many people I knew. Then, over my shoulder, in the aisle, I heard a woman say, "I think I'll just sit here next to Sandy Frazier."

To return home, to have a person call me by name; and to look up and remember her, forty-some years ago, as a junior-high girl in Bermuda shorts at the town's Ice Cream Social, an event sponsored by the League of Women Voters on the town green, where I and my friends chased her and her friends between tables and chairs and across the lawn flicking wadded-up pieces of paper cups at them with long-handled plastic ice-cream spoons, bouncing the missiles satisfyingly off the girls as they laughed and dodged—

I should finish that thought, and that sentence. But the service had begun for Cynthia, a friend to my family and me. She was dead at sixty-seven of Lou Gehrig's disease. Back in the nineteen-sixties, someone climbed the water tower and wrote Cynthia's name on it, billboard-large, a declaration of love. It stayed there above the trees for a long time, until the town painted it over. When I was eight or nine, Cynthia made a point of coming up and saying hello to me in the basement of the Congregational church. I was there, I think, because my mother was helping with the scenery for a play. When I was just out of



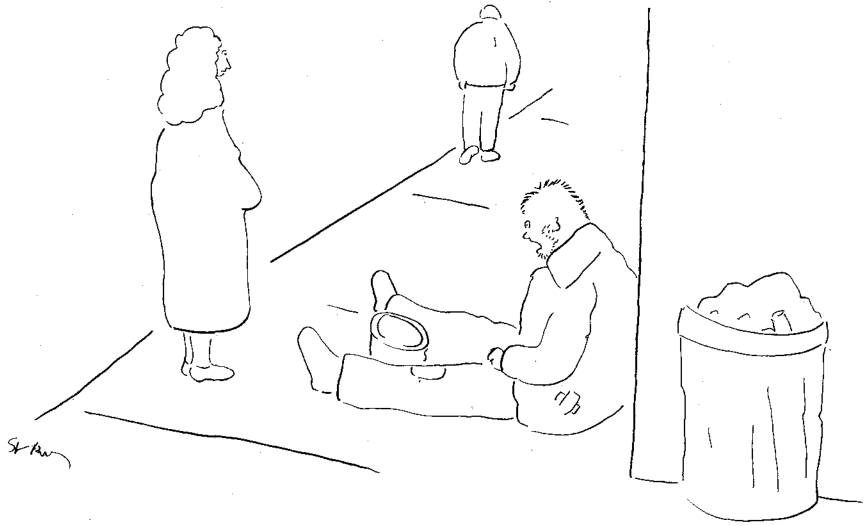
SAUL STEINBERG, "UNTITLED" (REFLECTIONS) 1977, © THE SAUL STEINBERG FOUNDATION

high school, Cynthia heard me telling my friends a story in her living room, and afterward she told me I would be a writer. When I was in my twenties, I came back to town one night from hitchhiking someplace east or west, and I found nobody home at our house, so I went over to Cynthia's, and she put on a bathrobe and came downstairs and heated up a bowl of soup for me and sat with me at the island in the middle of her kitchen as I ate.

In those days I was constantly leaving town. Hudson was made for leaving. The Ohio Turnpike, also called Interstate 80, crossed the town from east to west behind a chain-link fence. The distant sound of traffic on the turnpike was part of the aural background of the town, like the rising and falling of the whistle in the Town Hall every noon. After the turnpike, other interstates came nearby. In Hudson Township, you could go from shady gravel road, to two-lane county asphalt, to far-horizon, four-lane interstate highway in just a few turns of the steering wheel.

When I left the first time to go to college—the original leaving, which set a pattern for later ones—my plane to Boston was on a Sunday morning, and I spent all the preceding day and night going around town, seeing friends, saying goodbye, standing and talking under street lights in hushed, excited tones. Early Sunday, I was lying on the floor of a living room with Kent, Bitsy, and Kathy, listening over and over to the song "Leaving on a Jet Plane." Nobody was saying anything. The girls were quietly crying, not so much about my leaving as about the overwhelmingness of everything: the year was 1969. I cried, and also pretended to cry, myself. From ground level I looked at the nap of the rug and the unswept-up miscellany under the couch. I would never be even a tenth as at home anywhere again.

Four years later, I graduated with a degree in General Studies and no clear plans. Mostly I wanted to go back home. I had had enough of the East, a place I was unable to make much sense of. My college girlfriend, Sarah, whom I was too self-absorbed to appreciate, became fed up with my increasingly wistful home-town reminiscences as graduation day approached. "Don't invite me to your Ohio wedding" was one of her last remarks to me. After I received my diploma, my father came over to me in the courtyard of my dorm as I was talking to friends and hugged me so hard he lifted me off the ground. We loaded the trunk of the family Maverick with my belongings, the textbooks dumped in any which way, and drove straight home on Interstate 90 and the turnpike, arriving before dawn. I stayed awake and had some scrambled eggs my mother made, and then I went into the yard and watched the sunrise through the newly leafed trees. It rains a lot in northeastern Ohio, so the trees are extremely green. All around me, the summer landscape draped like a big hammock. I felt geographically



"*Can we talk about this after work?*"

• •

well situated, and defiantly at home.

I didn't bother to take my books out of the trunk of the car—just left them in there, rattling—and a few days later someone ran into my mother from behind on Middleton Road, and they scattered everywhere and got run over. My mother, as of course she would, carefully retrieved them. I still have several of them—for example, "The Power Elite," by C. Wright Mills, with a black Ohio tire tread running across the cover.

Why did Hudson enchant me? Why was life, there and then, so sweet? I think a million reasons happened to come together, none of which we grasped at the time. We had plenty of leisure. We had cars to drive. Gasoline was still so cheap it was practically free. Our parents, to whom the cars we drove belonged, had leisure, too. In their ease, they were inclined to take long vacations, and indulge us kids. Fathers (and a few mothers) had steady jobs, pensions, health insurance. The economic difficulties that would later take a lot of those away and that I still don't understand had not yet visibly begun. Vietnam was winding down. The draft had just ended, removing a load from all our minds. Et cetera.

In my case, life was good, by comparison, because it had recently been so bad. The previous December, my fifteen-year-old brother, Fritz, had died of leukemia. After that, the last thing my parents wanted to do was to keep my other siblings and me from having any fun we could have. Dad and Mom would be gone a lot of that summer, travelling in India. At our house, I would be in charge.

And then, as a further reason for life's sweetness, there was hot, drowsy, hilly, expansive Ohio itself. Not so many people lived in Ohio then, and its commercial sprawl had narrower limits. Some of the local roads still were dirt, and bisected working farms. Everybody still knew everybody. At Kepner's Bar on Main Street, I might run into a woman in a wild dress and hoop earrings who, it turned out, I'd known since first grade. To the west of town, on the turnpike, the highway went through a cut topped with a scenic (though otherwise unnecessary) bridge supported by a graceful arch that framed a mega-screen view of the Cuyahoga River valley and sunlit points beyond. Too big to punish, we could now go where we wanted; a kid I knew got the urge to hitchhike to the East Coast one afternoon and set out in his bare feet, and travelled barefoot the whole journey. I was done with school—finally and thoroughly done. Vague possibilities shimmered in every direction.

Back then it seemed there was a lot more room, especially outdoors. In a town like Hudson every piece of ground did not have to account for itself, in real-estate terms, as it does today. On the edges of town and sometimes beside roads and buildings were plots of weedy, dusty, driven-over earth that no one had given much thought to since Hudson began. At the Academy, where I went to high school, the shadows of trees at sunset stretched three hundred yards across the school's lawns. Often on summer evenings we played Wiffle ball there. The game was like baseball, only with a plastic ball that didn't go as fast and wobbled in flight, and could be caught bare-handed. You didn't need shoes, either, in the lawn's soft grass.

After a game of Wiffle ball at sunset—after running enormously far across the lawn to catch foul balls, sliding shirtless into base on close plays, reclining itchily in the grass waiting to bat, quitting the game only when it was too dark to see the ball—we would go to the beverage store downtown and stand in the pleasantly frigid walk-in cooler, deciding whether to buy the evening's supply of Stroh's beer by the twelve-pack or the case. And then the evening would continue. At this hour, girls we knew might be sitting on somebody's front porch smoking cigarettes. Twenty minutes of driving around would discover them.

That summer, a woman I'd gone out with when she was a girl happened to be in town. Her family had moved to Wheaton, Illinois, but she had come back to stay with her sister, who lived in an apartment above a store on Main Street. I climbed the outdoor stairs and knocked on the apartment door, and Susie came out, keeping one ear open for her sleeping nephew, whom she was babysitting. We were kissing at the bottom of the stairs in the shadows when she considered me for a moment and declared, "You're a real person."

The "you" was emphasized: "*You're* a real person." She meant this not as a compliment but as a statement of fact. I understood what she meant. After growing up in Hudson, where anybody you met you already knew, you found it hard to take people from anyplace else quite seriously. They might be nice, and interesting, and all, but they had a transitory quality. Only people from Hudson you'd known forever could be completely real.

Now I see Hudson as the place where I was spun and spun throughout my childhood in order to have maximum velocity when it finally let me go. My leaving-for-good happened like this:

I hung around that summer until my presence became otiose. Friends' parents started asking me how long I would be in town. My parents, back from India, began to suggest chores, like mowing the lawn.

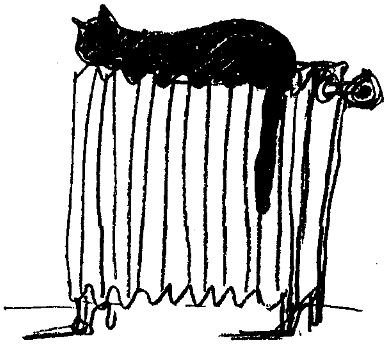
There's a certain nightmare time-warp feeling that can come over you—a sense that you're your present size but sitting in your old desk from elementary school, with your knees sticking up on the sides. The feeling can motivate you to plunge into any uncertainty, just so long as it's present-tense. One morning in late August, I packed a suitcase, jumped the turnpike fence, and began to hitchhike west.

First, I went to visit my best friend and former neighbor, Don, in Colchester, Illinois. Colchester is smaller than Hudson, and more intoxicatingly Midwestern. The back yards on Don's street were all clotheslines and garden rows of corn, and beyond the corn ran the tracks of a main rail line bound for St. Louis. Don and his friends and I used to smoke dope and sit by the tracks at night waiting for the eleven-o'clock train. At first, it was a little, faraway light, and then suddenly it grew into a blaring, blue-white beam and gigantic noise pounding immediately by. Then in a while the night would be its quiet self again. Just to lie in the back bedroom of Don's house with the curtains billowing inward on the breeze was middle-of-the-country nirvana for me.

From Colchester I continued on to Chicago, where I got a job on a European-style skin magazine published by *Playboy*. The magazine's editor had written to the *Harvard Lampoon*, which I had worked for in college, and had offered a job to any *Lampoon* person who wanted one. The offices were cavelike, with halls resembling tunnels and fragrant dark-brown corkboard panelling on the walls. In a short while, I learned that writing captions for photos of naked women is a particular talent, one that is surprisingly difficult to fake. I quit the day I was supposed to get a company I.D. card, which I feared would be a raised bunny head—the *Playboy* logo—stamped on a photo of my face.

Then I lay around my small North Side apartment for a few months on the bare mattress that was its only furniture and read books or looked at the plaster floret on the ceiling. Somewhere I had come across Hemingway's list of the novels he thought it essential for every writer to know and I started in on them. I also spent weeks at a time in uninterrupted, not uncomfortable despair. On Wednesdays, I would go to the newsstand across from the Ambassador East Hotel and buy the latest issue of *The New Yorker*, and then on my mattress I would read every word in it, including the columns of small type in the front. When Pauline Kael reviewed a movie by Sam Peckinpah, I told Susie that Kael had called him "a great and savage artist," and that I wanted people someday to say the same about me. Susie was going to school at the University of Northern Iowa at Cedar Falls. I sometimes took long Greyhound bus rides out to visit her.

My grandmother, a can-do person who enjoyed the challenge of setting wayward relatives on their feet, sent me many letters telling me to come visit her in Florida, and after about the fourth letter I agreed. Before I left Chicago, I gave up my apartment. The landlord was glad to get rid of me. He said that he thought my mattress, surrounded as it was by all the books and magazines I'd been reading, constituted a fire hazard. From Chicago I rode Greyhound buses for forty-five hours to Key West. On one bus I saw a skinny white guy with combed-high hair try to pick up a black woman sitting next to him, and when she politely moved to another seat he drank a pint or two of whiskey, began to shout at his reflection in the bus window, asked the old woman in front of him if she was wearing a wig, pulled her hair to find out, and eventually left the bus in handcuffs under the escort of the highway patrol, an expression of calm inevitability on his face. Between Georgia and Miami, I listened through the night to a Vietnam veteran with hair longer than Joni Mitchell's talk about a Vietnamese woman he had killed during the war, and about many other topics, his words flowing unstoppably and pathologically until I came almost to hate him. When I finally shot him an angry look, he gave me back a stare of such woefulness and misery that I was ashamed. Out of South Miami I sat next to a psychiatrist who explained to me in psychological terms why the passengers sitting near him objected to his chain-smoking. He was the only seatmate I openly argued with. When my grandmother met me at the Key West bus station, I was furious at her for all I'd been through.



Unlike my parents, Grandmother did not believe in depression. If my mother fell into a gloom, she usually nurtured it into a dark and stationary front that hung over the kitchen for days. As for my father, his strategy when he became depressed was to move from a regular level of depression as much farther down the scale as he could possibly go, getting more and more depressed and thinking up consequent sorrows and disasters of every kind until he reached a near-panic state. Then when he came to himself again, and looked at the actual situation, it seemed not so terrible after all. Grandmother's approach, by contrast, was never to give depression the smallest advantage. Whenever she sensed its approach, she attacked it and routed it and slammed the door.

In Key West, she didn't even allow me to be horizontal for longer than eight hours of sleeping a night. Early in the mornings, she appeared at the front desk of the Southern Cross Hotel, where she had rented me a small room, and she sent the plump and sarcastic German manager to pound on my door with a German-accented witticism. Then she would give me breakfast and hurry me off to the job she had found for me, doing gardening work for a lady even older than she, Minona Seagrove. Minona Seagrove walked very slowly and couldn't really bend down, but she loved to garden, and every day I served as her robot gardening arms, trimming palmetto fronds and planting bulbs while she stood behind me and said what to do. In the evenings, Grandmother made dinner for me and my cousin Libby, who was also visiting. Then sometimes we would play long games of Scrabble with Grandmother, her friend Marjorie Houck, and a very old English lady named Mavis Strange, who consistently won, using words that are in the dictionary but nobody has heard of.

Grandmother's closest friend, Betty Stock, had a daughter named Isabel who worked for *The New Yorker*. Under the name Andy Logan, Isabel wrote the Around City Hall column for the magazine. Just before graduation, I had half-heartedly applied to *The New Yorker* for a staff writing job. Grandmother said if I tried again she would ask Betty to ask Isabel to put in a word with the editor for me. This idea seemed kind of far-fetched, but I said O.K.: I hadn't brooked Grandmother in anything so far. Grandmother didn't like my hair, so she sent me to her longtime hairdresser and had him cut it. It came out looking bad, though not as bad as I had expected. Grandmother also went through my wardrobe, if it could be called a wardrobe, and singled out a pair of khaki slacks, a shirt, and a blue sweater as acceptable clothing to wear for New York job interviews. I trusted her unquestioningly as an authority on what well-dressed office workers in New York City wore.

After a month or so of this retooling, Grandmother was satisfied, and ready for me to move on. Libby drove me in Grandmother's Ford Fairlane a few miles up the Keys to a good place to hitchhike. In a night-and-day hitchhiking marathon, I made it from the Keys to Morgantown, Kentucky, where my friend Kent was doing volunteer work for the Glenmary Home Missioners. Along the way, I got some wacky Southern rides, including one across South Carolina with a Post Office driver in a small refrigerated truck carrying, he said, "human eyeballs." He was taking them to an eye bank somewhere.

In late afternoon, I arrived at the slant-floored mountain shack Kent had rented, and I was so tired that I immediately lay down and fell asleep on a bed in a side room. It happened that Kent was having a party for the entire community that night. As the guests came in, they piled their coats on top of the bed, on top of me. At the party's height a man and a woman entered the room and closed the door and, not knowing I was there, lay down on the coats and began to talk about the extramarital affair they were having. I emerged from sleep to the sound of their French-movie-type dialogue: "Oh, Roger, I've felt like crying for the last three days!" "Oh, Arliss, [mumble mumble mumble]." Then suddenly the door opened, and from it, like a super-loud P.A. system, the voice of the outraged husband: "Get out of that fuckin' bed, Roger!" The two men adjourned outside for a fistfight while the woman stayed on the coats, sobbing. I began to stir, poking part of my head out from under. The sobbing stopped; silence; then, in complete bafflement, "Who's *he*?"

A few days later, I was back in Hudson. At this slow time of year, none of my friends were around, except Kathy. She had a job at a small, classy store on Main Street that sold women's clothes. I thought that now would be a good opportunity to tell her of the crush I had on her, but as I stood in the store watching her refold sweaters or sat with her on the couch in her family's TV room talking about what our other friends were doing, the moment never came up. Late one night, I went over to her house with an idea of throwing some pebbles at her window, waking her, and telling her how I felt. When I approached through the back yards, the light was still on in her bedroom; as I got closer I saw in the dimness a guy at the edge of her lawn staring so raptly at her window that he never noticed me.

I faded back into the next yard and cut across it and then went to the sidewalk, and as I passed by the front of Kathy's house I saw a cigarette glow on the front steps. She was sitting there, and didn't seem at all surprised to see me. I told her about the guy in her back yard and she smiled. She had a quick smile that went horizontally, like a rubber band stretched between two fingers. The corners of it were so cute they drew your eyes into closeup frame. With undisguisable happiness she said, "That was John."

And so on to New York City. Early one morning before work, Kathy gave me a ride to Exit 13 on the turnpike, just east of town. Local hitchhiking wisdom said that more eastbound trucks got on the highway there. After a friendly hug across the front seat I got out and she drove away. I carried my same suitcase and a cardboard sign on which I'd written "NYC" in large letters with a Magic Marker. I was keyed up. I hadn't asked my parents for money—some of my Minona Seagrove earnings still remained—and I intended not to come back without something to show. I stood, heroic to myself, on the shoulder of the on-ramp in the smell of diesel and the gusts from traffic blowing by. After half an hour or so, a truck pulled over. That moment is always a thrill, when the air brakes hiss and the big machine swerves over and stops just for you. I ran to it, threw my suitcase up through the open door, and climbed the rungs to the cab.

I didn't go very far that day. Many short rides and long waits put me after nightfall at a truck stop in central Pennsylvania. The place had a dormitory floor upstairs and a dozen beds for truckers, and bathrooms with showers. I signed the register in my own name, boldly wrote down that I drove for Carolina Freight, and paid my five dollars for a narrow metal-frame bed. I slept well in a room with a changing group of truckers, each of whom put in his few sleeping hours determinedly and then was gone. In the morning I showered, ate a big breakfast in the restaurant, and, caffeinated and pleased with the day so far, stood by the parking-lot exit with my sign.

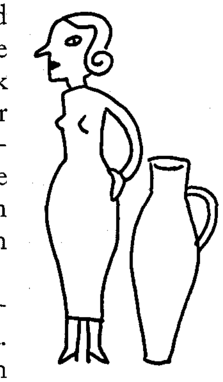
The truck that pulled over for me there looked so unpromising that I hesitated before getting in. The tractor was gas-powered, not diesel, with a rusty white cab and a small trailer—the kind of rig, smaller than an eighteen-wheeler, that hauls carnival rides. Its driver appeared equally off-brand. He had strands of black hair around his too-white face and he lacked a few teeth. After saying hello, he told me that he had just taken a lot of methamphetamines. I asked if he was feeling them yet, and he whipped off his sunglasses and said, "Look at my eyes!" Bedspring spirals of energy seemed to be radiating from his black irises. He was beating on the steering wheel with his palms, fiddling with the all-static radio, and moving from one conversational topic to another randomly.

It is perhaps unfair to say that drivers of carnival trucks are horny guys; free-floating lust howls down every highway in the world, sweeping all kinds of people along. This particular speed-popping driver, however, closely fit the horny-guy profile. As his conversation caromed around, it kept returning to, and finally settled on, the subject of a whorehouse he said was not far up the road. He talked about how much he liked it, and what he did there, and the girls who worked in it, and the old man who owned it, and how popular he, the driver, was there.

Soon the driver was going to suggest that he and I make a visit to this whorehouse. I could tell; clearly his drift tended no other way. As he went on, I considered how I would respond. Sanity said, obviously, no. Under no circumstances go to a whorehouse with this guy. Say thanks but no thanks, and jump out as soon as possible. I was ready to be sane and do that. But then I thought . . . I wasn't bound for New York just to demur and make my apologies. Begging off of anything at this point didn't feel right. New York City was the big time, and I wanted to be big-time when I got there. When the moment came to jump, I intended to jump. Right then the guy turned to me with a wicked and challenging glint to his sunglasses. Almost before the words left his mouth I thanked him politely and said that yes, going to this whorehouse sounded like an excellent idea.

For a while after that, the guy fell silent. I flattered myself that maybe I'd taken him by surprise. He turned the truck off the highway and proceeded along a two-lane country road. I had no idea what I would do when we got to the whorehouse. The thought of going to it scared me dizzy. I figured I would come up with a plan when I had to. Ahead I saw a tall, narrow, three-story house, its bare windows sealed inside with blinds. A small neon beer sign lit a side door. "There she is!" the driver said, perking up. No cars were in the gravel parking lot as he coasted in, downshifting. He leaned across the dash and pulled over by the side door to examine it closely, giving a few light taps on the horn. No reply or sign of life. More taps on the horn. A few minutes passed. Then, reluctantly, he concluded that no one was about, and he headed back to the highway.

Oh, the intense and private joy of the uncalled bluff! Until now I had experienced it only in games. This felt a hundred times greater than any game. Keeping my face nonchalant I exulted inwardly, and made a resolve that in my new life in New York City I would bluff whenever the occasion arose. At that moment on the road in the middle of Pennsylvania, I quit living in Hudson and began to live in the world.



The guy let me off someplace in eastern Pennsylvania. By then, the pills he had taken had evidently set him back down, and he looked different, kind of shrivelled and mumbly, behind the wheel. I was relieved to be shut of him and out of his spooky cab, and I shouted with the pleasure of being alone as soon as his truck was out of sight. The next ride I got was with a guy about my age from San Isidro, Costa Rica. He must've been part Indian, because he had straight black hair like a Sioux's and an Aztec nose. He was littler than a Sioux, though, and olive-skinned. He drove a big-engine car, the kind they had back then that looked like slabs, and its rear seat was full of cardboard boxes of his stuff. He had lived in Chicago and was moving to New York City, he said. I told him I was, too. With a companion we knew better each of us might have been cooler and more restrained, but as he maneuvered the big car through Jersey traffic we cheered at the first glimpse of the city skyline faintly gray on the horizon.

I hadn't seen a lot of cities then, and I didn't know that New York, to a traveller coming from the west, affords the best first-time, big-city view in the U.S.A. The guy from Costa Rica and I cruised across the long and splendid drumroll of open-sky swamp up to the Hudson River. Then we swerved down the elevated highway toward the Lincoln Tunnel, and the city suddenly and manifestly filled the windshield and side windows, rising from the Hudson as if lifted by eyelids when you opened your eyes. No skyline I know of is its equal; across the windows it ran, left to right, like a long and precise and detailed and emphatic sentence ending with the double exclamation points of the World Trade Center towers.

It was a mild day in early March, just before rush hour. Lights had come on in some of the buildings, and dusk was beginning to gather in the spaces between them. We went through the Lincoln Tunnel and popped up on the city floor, with buildings and vehicles impending all around. Our windows were open; the city smelled like coffee, bus exhaust, and fingernail polish. The Costa Rican was going to stay with relatives in Queens, a place as exotic to me then as Costa Rica. I was going to Greenwich Village to meet my friend David, who had told me he could find me a place to stay. I got out at Thirty-fourth and Seventh, the southwest corner. When I pass by that corner occasionally today, I still think of it as the place where I landed. The Costa Rican and I wished each other good luck, without pretending to exchange phone numbers (we didn't have them, anyway) or saying we'd keep in touch. We were now each a little part of the other's past, and in New York the past was gone. ♦

OPEN UP
→ OPEN → UNFOLD → DISCOVER
KNOPF MAPGUIDES
PARIS
THE CITY IN SECTION-BY-SECTION MAPS
TO Romance.
Pocket Size!
KNOPF MAPGUIDES
feature fold-out maps and all the information you need.
www.aaknopf.com
→ OPEN → UNFOLD → DISCOVER

Snowy River
by Akubra®
From the great Australian outback, a pure fur felt hat for sun or rain. Fully lined, 3¼" brim.
No. 1611 Snowy River........$110
Specify size: 6¾-8⅛ and color: Fawn, Gray or Black.
Add $7 for handling. Satisfaction guaranteed.
Visit our web site or request our catalog
Filson® clothing and luggage • Celtic Jewelry
Bosca® leather goods • Devold® Woolens
David Morgan
800-324-4934 davidmorgan.com
11812 N Creek Pkwy N, Ste 103 • Bothell WA 98011

Rings of Endearment
14K & 18K Gold and Platinum
Add a Diamond
Love Your Valentine
From $145
Choices and Ordering at
rianel.com or 866-830-9281
by RIANEL.....*more than just a ring*

Stone Soup
the magazine by young writers and artists
The Literary
Magazine by Children
A perfect gift to inspire creativity
$34/yr (6 issues) • 800-447-4569
stories • poems • art • ages 8–13
www.stonesoup.com

RETIRE TO CHAPEL HILL, NC
Fearrington Village is full of bluebirds, hollyhocks, belted cows, and fascinating people of all ages.
800.277.0130 www.fearrington.com

French & Italian Holiday Rentals
Live like a European in your own chateau, villa or farmhouse. Weekly rentals. Most regions.
Call (510)559-8080 or write
2124 Kittredge St, #200, Berkeley, CA 94704
www.villeetvillage.com
VILLE ET VILLAGE®

THE WORLD OF BUSINESS

PARTNERS

Eisner, Ovitz, and the Disney wars.

BY JAMES B. STEWART

In August of 1995, Michael Eisner, the C.E.O. of the Walt Disney Company, announced that his friend the talent agent Michael Ovitz would become the company's new president. Eisner had been Disney's chief executive for nearly twelve years, and in that time he—along with Frank Wells, his chief operating officer; Jeffrey Katzenberg, the studio chairman; and Roy Disney, the chairman of feature animation—had transformed the once moribund company into a Wall Street favorite, and its stock price had risen from less than two dollars to nineteen dollars.

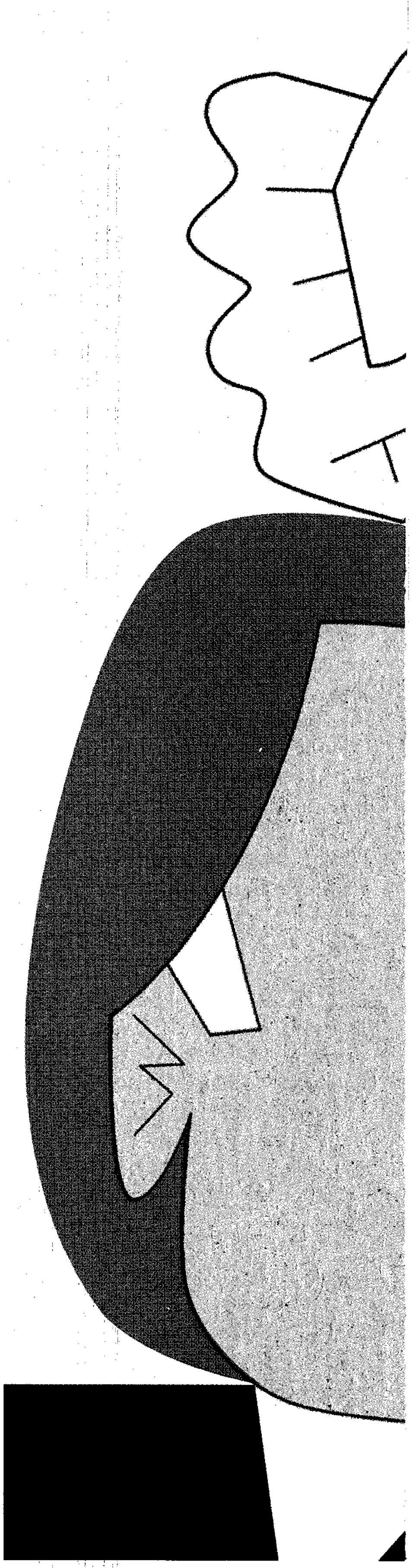
But Disney had problems. Frank Wells, who was widely perceived as a steadying influence on the creative but impulsive Eisner, died in a helicopter crash in the spring of 1994. Eisner underwent heart surgery that July, and Katzenberg left the company a few months later, after a bitter falling out. Eisner, who had assumed the titles of chairman, president, and chief executive, had refused to pay a bonus that Katzenberg had been promised. The following year, when Disney acquired Capital Cities/ABC, for nineteen billion dollars, the size of the company nearly doubled. Eisner's wife, Jane, urged her husband to hire someone like Ovitz to ease the burden on him.

The press described Ovitz's appointment as a management coup. The Los Angeles *Times* declared that Ovitz, the head of Creative Artists Agency, was "the kind of powerful, globally connected executive needed to run the biggest of the new breed of giant entertainment and media complexes." A decade earlier, the *Wall Street Journal* had designated Ovitz "the most powerful individual in Hollywood." At C.A.A., however, Ovitz had also gained a reputation for ruthlessness, which was famously depicted in a 1989 account by the screenwriter Joe Eszterhas, who was defecting to another agency, and who claimed that Ovitz told him, "You're not going anywhere. You're not leaving this agency. If you do, my foot soldiers who go up and down Wilshire Boulevard each day will blow your brains out." (Ovitz denies making threats.) But the friendship between Eisner and Ovitz was longstanding, and their wives, Jane Eisner and Judy Ovitz, were best friends. Both families had houses in Aspen, and they spent many holidays together.

As it turned out, Eisner fired Ovitz after fourteen months, paying him a hundred and forty million dollars to settle his contract. This led to a protracted lawsuit, brought by Disney shareholders in Delaware, where the company was incorporated. The plaintiffs contend that the company's directors, including Eisner and Ovitz, breached their duties to shareholders by mutely succumbing to Eisner's demands; they had hired Ovitz with scant scrutiny, fired him with even less, and then paid him a huge sum to leave, when they could have fired him for cause and owed him nothing. Ordinarily, courts give wide latitude to directors' "business judgment," but in this instance the chancery court, in a decision that may have a large impact on corporate boardrooms, concluded that the allegations, if true, amounted to bad faith, and let the case go forward.

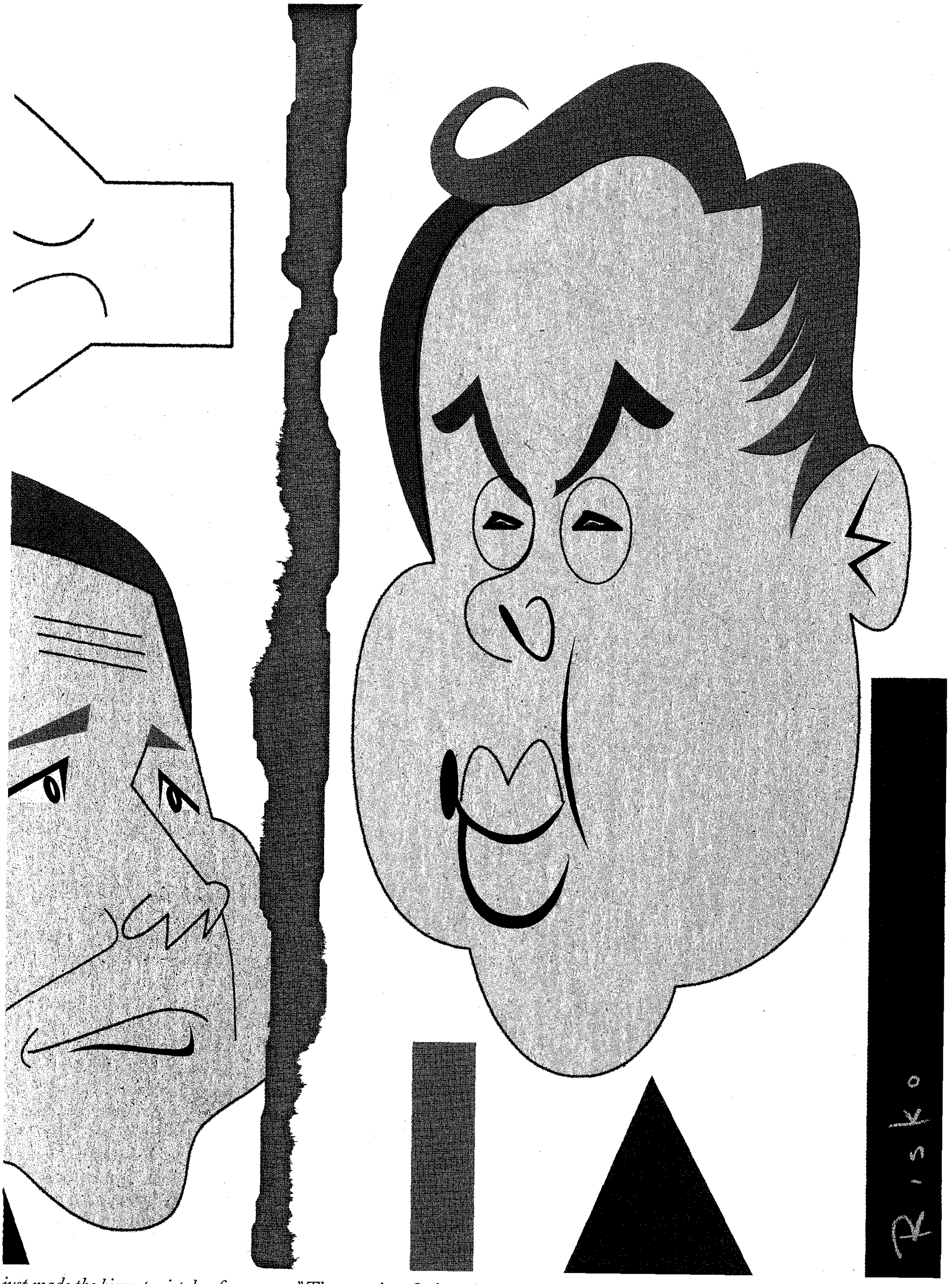
In October, after years of legal maneuvers and depositions, the suit finally went to trial, and Ovitz and Eisner were compelled to publicly recount the details of their disastrous partnership. Also forced to testify was a parade of current and former Disney directors, including Roy Disney and his ally Stanley Gold, who are now openly at war with Eisner, and are leading a shareholder revolt to oust him from the company. The trial, which will be concluded later this year, has provided a seemingly interminable spectacle of the institutional and personal neuroses that sometimes govern corporate life.

Eisner joined Disney in 1984, after a successful career at ABC and then at Paramount Pictures, where he was president under Paramount's chairman,

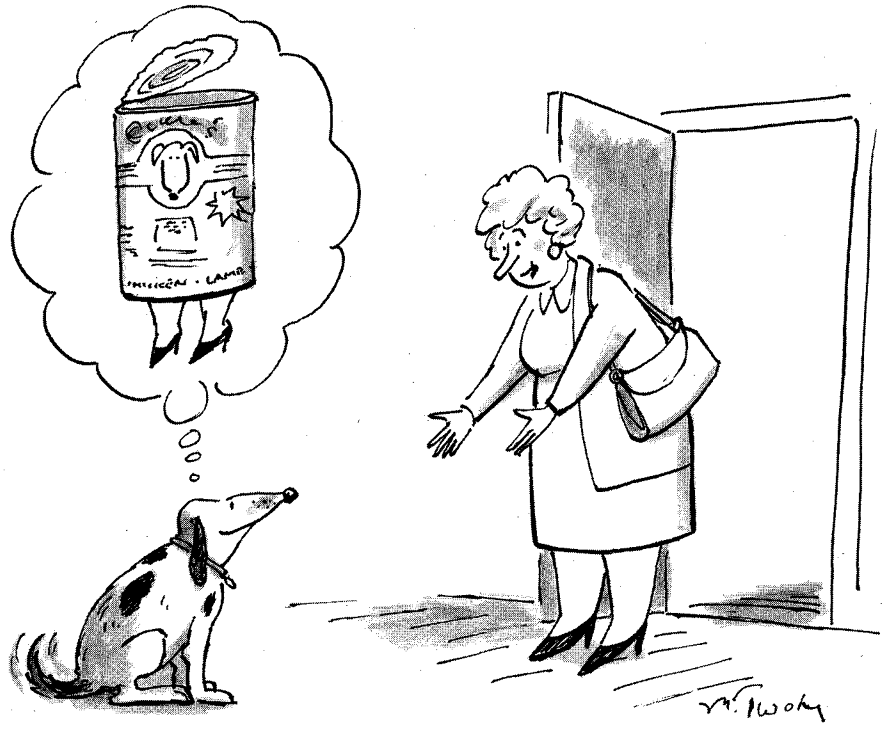


On the day he hired Ovitz, Eisner said, "I thi

ROBERT RISKO



just made the biggest mistake of my career." That evening, Ovitz told his wife, "I just made the biggest mistake of my career."



Barry Diller. During his first year at Disney, Eisner had tried to recruit Ovitz and, in the following years, had periodically raised the possibility of his joining the company. In the late eighties, however, Ovitz, who grew up in the San Fernando Valley and had risen from the mailroom at William Morris to found C.A.A., had been expanding his activities, acting more as an investment banker, a dealmaker, an adviser to corporate chiefs, and less as a traditional agent. Most visibly, he had been an adviser to Japan's Matsushita Corporation in its acquisition of Universal, and to the Sony Corporation in its acquisition of the Columbia and Tri-Star studios. He had also advised Coca-Cola on branding and advertising strategy.

In July of 1994, some weeks after Frank Wells's death, the Eisners attended a movie première in Pittsburgh. On the return flight to Los Angeles, they discussed the advantages and disadvantages of hiring Ovitz. As Eisner later described the scene in his autobiography, he told his wife he thought that Ovitz could ease the burden on him, and that Hollywood and Wall Street would be reassured by Ovitz's appointment. It would no doubt be considered a coup. At the same time, Eisner was apprehensive. "You have to understand, I don't want to feel as if I'm in competition with anybody," he said. "My biggest question is whether he could tolerate being No. 2, and whether he would be a team player." Still, Eisner said that he would readily cede authority to Ovitz. "The truth is that I'm very happy to have all the divisions report to him, so long as he lets me know what he's doing," he told Jane. "If we can agree on that, it could be fantastic."

A few days later, Eisner and Ovitz were scheduled to attend the investment banker Herbert Allen's annual media and entertainment conference, in Sun Valley, Idaho, and Eisner invited the Ovitzes to accompany him and Jane on the Disney jet.

According to Eisner, he impressed on Ovitz the benefits of joining Disney as president. "I'm ready for a change," Ovitz said. "I think the idea of working together is great. We would make an unbeatable team." But Eisner was vague about just what Ovitz's role would be at Disney. He liked to use the word "partner," but in Hollywood generally, and especially with Eisner, "partner" is an ill-defined term. At Disney, Frank Wells, despite his being nominally Eisner's equal, had always been subordinate. Ovitz, however, was unfamiliar with corporate hierarchies; during his time at William Morris, the agency had no formal titles, nor did C.A.A. during its early years.

At one point, Ovitz asked about the Disney board, saying, "What if they don't approve me?" He remembers that Eisner laughed, ticking off the various ways that board members were beholden to him, and assuring Ovitz that they would do what he wanted. Still, by the time the plane landed, Eisner felt that he and Ovitz were at an "impasse" over the issue of Ovitz's desire to share top billing. Eisner later wrote that he had been "upset" by the conversation.

While in Idaho, Eisner had experienced chest pain and fatigue, and upon returning to Los Angeles he went directly to the hospital. He failed a stress test, and an angiogram showed that a major artery was ninety-five-per-cent blocked. The doctor recommended an immediate open-heart bypass operation. As Eisner was about to be wheeled into surgery, he made some "last requests" of his family: "I want to be buried above ground, not below. Also, I really don't want you to build the new house we've been considering, because ours is fine, and we don't need a bigger one." Finally, he said, "If it becomes an issue, I think that either Ovitz or Diller would be good choices to succeed me." Eisner also suggested that if anything happened to him Jane should be named to the Disney board.

At four o'clock the next morning, Jane Eisner called Ovitz in Sun Valley. "Michael has had open-heart surgery," she said. "He's in intensive care. Can you come down?"

The Ovitzes were leaving the following morning for Martha's Vineyard, to celebrate their twenty-fifth wedding anniversary, but Ovitz cancelled the plan and took an 8 A.M. flight to Los Angeles. When he got to the hospital (on whose board of governors he served), he met Jane and went with her straight to the intensive-care unit. Like all post-operative heart patients, Eisner looked terrible—pale, motionless, with a tube in his throat. Ovitz immediately took charge, which seemed to come as a relief to Jane. They set up a schedule so that someone—Jane, one of Eisner's sons, Ovitz, or Judy Ovitz—would be with Eisner at all times, and able to monitor his condition. Jane went home to get some sleep. Ovitz ordered that no one be admitted to Eisner's bedside except his regular psychotherapist and Irwin Russell, his personal attorney.

Eisner regained consciousness at about 6:30 A.M. A few hours later, Sanford Litvack, Disney's general counsel and a potential successor to Wells, showed up with a press release that he had drafted, and he seemed furious when Ovitz wouldn't let him see Eisner. Ovitz approved the release. When Eisner had the tube in his throat removed, Ovitz recalled later, his first questions to Ovitz were about the press coverage. He was obsessed with the idea that Katzenberg, who, even as Eisner recovered, was agitating to be made president, might talk to the press.

Eisner's doctors suggested that, as part of his recovery, he try yoga. After leaving the hospital, he hired a private instructor, who came regularly to his house. He started a low-fat vegetarian diet, and he walked on a treadmill for forty-five minutes three times a week. Lying on his back on the floor and instructed to meditate, he thought about Katzenberg, with whom he felt intensely competitive. The regimen wasn't working. "I sort of liked stress," Eisner wrote later. "After several weeks, I quit, rationalizing that my life would be far less stressful when I stopped trying so hard to relax."

Nevertheless, Jane insisted that he could no longer continue as chairman, president, and C.E.O., and that he needed help running the company.

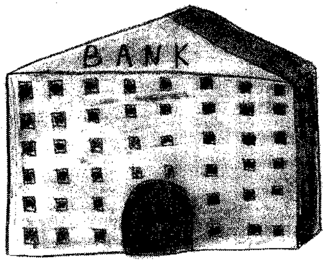
In January of 1995, Ray Watson, a board member and former Disney chairman, sent Eisner a letter asking who his designated successor would be if he were suddenly incapacitated.

"Here's the sad truth," Eisner wrote back. "I do not have one. . . . But if I do die or become incapacitated, I suggest you talk to Barry Diller and Michael Ovitz and make a choice. Today I would choose Ovitz (I think) because he is a hard worker, a good family man and motivated, maybe too motivated and somewhat untested. Barry is completely the opposite. He has been tested. He is smarter. Much more ethical. . . . He has a real moral compass and great taste. He is not a family man, but I believe you do not have to be a chicken to know a good egg. He will adapt to family values quicker than Fred MacMurray. Maybe I would choose Diller. I don't know. I do know there is nobody else. . . . I think my first choice now would be Diller. He is a creative executive."

In the spring of 1995, there were reports that Ovitz was talking with Edgar Bronfman, Jr., about running Universal, which had just been acquired by Seagram, the distilling company controlled by the Bronfman family. Universal posed a unique competitive threat to Eisner, largely because it had a theme park, Universal Studios, near Walt Disney World, and a hugely successful studio tour in California, something that Disney had never been able to do; he hated the idea that Ovitz might end up as a rival. In May, Eisner tried to persuade Ovitz that he would be better off at Disney than at Universal, where he would have to answer to ruthless, mercurial family members. "A board gives you much more freedom," Ovitz remembers Eisner saying.

Ovitz wasn't swayed, but the deal with Universal collapsed, partly over the question of how much autonomy Ovitz would have. In Aspen that August, Ovitz and Eisner spent twenty-four hours in nearly constant contact, either by telephone, at Eisner's house, or on long hikes. Because Ovitz would be giving up an extremely lucrative position at C.A.A., Eisner later testified, his remuneration had to be correspondingly generous, not so much in salary as in discretionary bonus and stock-option provisions. Ovitz's total compensation could not exceed seventy-five per cent of Eisner's—a significant point, because Eisner was in the process of negotiating a new employment agreement for himself, and pegging Eisner's pay to Ovitz's meant that the more Ovitz made, the more Eisner could be paid.

Eisner offered his friend the title of president and a seat on the board, but insisted on retaining the titles of chairman and chief executive. Unlike Frank Wells, who had reported directly to the board, Ovitz would report to Eisner. Eisner also refused to give Ovitz the title of chief operating officer, holding it back as something that Ovitz could earn. According to Ovitz, Eisner promised that, with the exception of Roy Disney's animation division, all of Disney's operating divisions, including ABC, would report to Ovitz as president, which made him the de-facto chief operating officer, whether or not he held the title. Eisner felt sure that, however Ovitz wanted to interpret the notion of "partner," he would be a clear No. 2.



Ovitz later indicated he had understood that he would be reporting to Eisner, and that Eisner would be the "senior" partner. Yet he also testified, "I must say that at that stage of my life, with the success that I had, I don't think I looked at myself as junior or senior. I looked at myself as reporting to Michael Eisner." And he said that, in the end, it was all pretty much a matter of trust in his friendship with Eisner.

At one point, Ovitz asked, "How can this work when you put me on top of people that have been there for a long time?"

"You and I will be the bosses," Eisner replied, according to Ovitz's testimony. "They report to us. And we will make it work."

"I relied on his word," Ovitz continued. "I relied on everything he said to me. I was less concerned about the specifics and the documentation issues because I trusted him. . . . I trusted Michael Eisner totally. And I believe that he trusted me."

The Aspen negotiations concluded during the course of a long hike. As Eisner and Ovitz and their wives reached Independence Pass, the two men shook hands on their new "partnership."

The details of this complicated agreement were hastily negotiated and put together in a single weekend. Although Disney's corporate bylaws require that the president be hired by the board of directors, neither the compensation committee nor the full Disney board reviewed or approved the agreement that weekend. Irwin Russell, Eisner's lawyer and the chairman of the compensation committee, called Sidney Poitier, one of the committee's three other members, in the middle of the night on his yacht off the coast of Sardinia to tell him that Ovitz was being hired. Russell couldn't recall whether he mentioned "any numbers." Ignacio Lozano, another committee member, wasn't told until the following Monday.

That same weekend, Eisner gave a dinner at his house in Aspen for Ovitz and Judy Ovitz. Sid Bass, whose family held nearly twenty per cent of Disney's stock, was also there. Bass was opposed to hiring Ovitz, whom he considered unqualified, and it was highly unusual for Eisner to defy his wishes. Ovitz realized that this was an audition, and, at least in his view, he and Bass seemed to get along. He emphasized the opportunities in the rapidly evolving field of communications technology, a field that Bass was investing heavily in, and the opportunities for Disney to expand its international presence and revenues. The mood at dinner was ebullient. Jane Eisner thanked Ovitz and his wife for helping to take the burden off Eisner.

At 1:30 P.M. the next day, after a final conference call with the lawyers and negotiators, Ovitz hesitated and asked if he could have ten more minutes to think about it. He still didn't quite understand how the partnership with Eisner was going to work. Nor was he blind to Eisner's faults. He had been intimately involved with the Katzenberg saga: the acrimonious departure, the feud over the bonus. He had listened to Eisner criticize Frank Wells and Barry Diller. But Ovitz thought that his and Eisner's friendship made his situation different. He called Eisner back.

"Judy and I have talked it through," he said. "I'm putting myself in your hands."

Eisner hung up and called Tony Schwartz, who was co-writing his autobiography. "I think I just made the biggest mistake of my career," Eisner said.

That evening, Eisner asked Ovitz to stop by his house in Bel Air to go over the announcement. Ovitz arrived in good spirits, but when he walked into Eisner's dining room, he later recalled, he knew that something was wrong. What had obviously been an animated conversation came to a halt. Eisner was seated at the table. Across from him were Sandy Litvack, the lawyer who had entertained hopes of succeeding Wells, and Steve Bollenbach, the chief financial officer. Jody Dreyer, Eisner's assistant, was sitting at one end of the table. John Dreyer, her husband and the head of public relations, was standing. Bollenbach, who had once helped Donald Trump stave off bankruptcy, had been lured to Disney by Eisner a few months earlier, with the assurance that, if things worked out, he would succeed Wells, and Eisner had delayed telling him about Ovitz's hiring until that afternoon. (Eisner later conceded that he never actually considered Bollenbach a likely successor.)

Bollenbach looked across the table at Ovitz and said, "Welcome to the company. I just want you to know that I'll never work for you."

Litvack added, "Me, too. I'm not going to report to you."

Ovitz was stunned, and he waited for Eisner to come to his defense. "I had no idea that those statements would be made," he testified later. "They were made aggressively and they were made in a way that was, in my opinion, disrespectful." But Eisner said nothing. Finally, he asked the Dreyers to leave the room, but they went into an adjoining screening room and left the door open. Ovitz was convinced that they were listening, and that Eisner wanted them there as witnesses.

Though Ovitz was not sophisticated about matters of corporate management, he knew that, without control over Litvack and Bollenbach, he was effectively stripped of legal and financial responsibilities, which meant that he was not really a chief operating officer, and was dangerously bereft of any management authority. When Eisner failed to put down the rebellion, Ovitz understood that his friend had betrayed him. He did his best, he later said, to maintain his composure, and tried to reassure Bollenbach and Litvack that he would be supportive if they reported to him: "I didn't want to walk in and all of a sudden have two guys quit. So I tried to dance around it and make it all work." It was obvious that they weren't going to budge without pressure, so Ovitz suggested that he and Eisner leave the room. They went upstairs for a private talk in the bedroom of one of Eisner's sons.

"You did a really good job with that," Eisner told him.

But Ovitz was distraught. As he recalled, "I was looking for his advice and guidance and his support and backing, which I thought would be critical in my first moment at the company." He begged Eisner to return to the dining room and back him.

"I can't do that," Eisner said. "Look, that's the way it is. If you don't want to do the deal, just tell me so right now."

Ovitz, however, had already arranged to sell his interest in C.A.A. As he later put it, "I had given up my business. I had been put in a position that I had made a deal that I had agreed to with Mr. Eisner. I shook his hand. I intended to keep my end of the bargain and I expected him to. I trusted him."

When Ovitz and Eisner returned to the dining room, Ovitz abjectly tried to win the approval of Litvack and Bollenbach. "I did everything I could as a salesperson to try to sell these guys into an amiable, decent relationship," Ovitz testified. "I didn't want to get Michael into trouble and I didn't want to upset them. Frankly, I had no idea how to handle this." The Dreyers returned to the room, and they went over the press release, which stressed that Litvack and Bollenbach would report to Eisner.

When Ovitz got home, he looked stricken. "What's the matter?" Judy asked.

"I just made the biggest mistake of my career," Ovitz said, unwittingly echoing Eisner.

Ovitz's hiring as Disney's president was announced on August 14th. That morning, Ovitz and Eisner both signed copies of a letter detailing the terms of Ovitz's employment: a five-year contract with an annual base salary of one million dollars; a discretionary bonus of at least one and a half million; options to purchase five million Disney shares.

Ovitz arrived for work at Disney weeks before his official starting date of October 1st. He had expected to occupy Frank Wells's former office, next to Eisner on the sixth floor of the Team Disney building, but Sandy Litvack had already moved in. Bollenbach and Larry Murphy, the head of strategic planning, also had offices on six. Of the various division heads, only Joe Roth, the studio chairman, had an office there. The others were on five. Ovitz moved into a small office next to Dennis Hightower, who was in charge of Disney's television division. At one point, Ovitz suggested building a staircase between the fifth and sixth floors, so that he and the division heads would have easier access to Eisner and the other top executives. According to Ovitz, Eisner dismissed the notion as a waste of money, and said that the building had been designed deliberately to prevent easy access to his office. (Ovitz later moved to the sixth floor, to a conference room that was renovated at a cost of two million dollars.)

As one of the country's most successful agents, Ovitz had revolutionized the industry by bundling actors, screenwriters, and directors on prospective film projects. These packages often included multi-film production deals, first-look or exclusivity arrangements, office and overhead arrangements on studio lots.

One of the first people Ovitz contacted about doing business with Disney—on his first day in the office—was Brad Grey, the chairman and chief executive of Brillstein-Grey, a television-production and talent-management company with high-profile clients like Brad Pitt and Jennifer Aniston. Grey had been a client of Ovitz's at C.A.A., and he was already talking with Disney, and other studios, about television-production deals. As Ovitz later explained his reasoning, he wanted to arrange a deal for exclusive access to Grey's projects and also the people he managed, and, in return, Disney could offer Grey a chance to break out of television and into movies.

According to Eisner, that afternoon, Joe Roth, vacationing on Martha's Vineyard, got a call from Jake Bloom, Grey's lawyer, who told him that Ovitz was offering Grey a deal. "I can't make that deal," Roth protested. "I've never even developed a script with Brad."

"This is what Ovitz wants to do," Bloom said.

Roth, incensed about both the proposed deal and the fact that Ovitz hadn't cleared it in advance with him, called Ovitz, who seemed puzzled that Roth was so upset. Though Ovitz was now Roth's boss, Roth immediately called Eisner. "Six hours," Roth said.

"What do you mean?"

"It's taken exactly six hours for my fears to be realized," Roth said.

The following Monday, Ovitz attended, for the first time, the weekly staff lunch that Eisner held, and which, Eisner had often proudly told him, was a forum for a freewheeling, spontaneous exchange of ideas. But most of the lunch, Ovitz recalls, was taken up by a stream-of-consciousness monologue by Eisner. No one disagreed with anything he said. As the weeks went by, Ovitz came to think of the lunches as a waste of time, and he was often late or excused himself to make a phone call—which annoyed Eisner intensely.

Despite these early missteps, and despite the doubts that Eisner expressed to Tony Schwartz and others and his own thoughts about getting rid of Ovitz, on September 26th Eisner recommended that the Disney board approve Ovitz's appointment as president. Although he maintained that he had kept all members of the board fully informed, by phone, about the courtship of Ovitz, it's clear that only a few—Stanley Gold, Ray Watson, and Irwin Russell—knew anything in any detail. Ignacio Lozano testified that he thought Ovitz's hiring was a "done deal," even before the board meeting. Neither the board as a whole nor the compensation committee had met to discuss Ovitz after the announcement and prior to the vote. Most board members knew the terms of Ovitz's employment only as they were reflected in a brief summary of the deal. The minutes of the meeting show merely that Eisner "reviewed Mr. Ovitz's professional and educational credentials."

Board members later testified that they did discuss Ovitz, albeit briefly. Neither Litvack nor Bollenbach said anything about his refusal to report to Ovitz or his reservations about him. No one raised any questions about the fact that Ovitz retained an ongoing economic interest in his former clients at C.A.A. (he still received commissions under agreements he'd negotiated while at the agency). This posed an obvious potential conflict, since Ovitz had a financial interest in having Disney hire those clients.

The board unanimously approved the appointment of Ovitz as Disney's president. Moreover, it acquiesced when Eisner recommended that Irwin Russell be given a two-hundred-and-fifty-thousand-dollar payment for his "extraordinary services" in negotiating Ovitz's contract and persuading him to come to Disney.

Ovitz had made it clear that he ex-

"How's my praying?"

pected to at least maintain the life style that he had enjoyed while he was at C.A.A., which included all the usual perquisites of a top-level Hollywood executive—personal assistants, access to a private jet, a car and driver, and a virtually unlimited entertainment budget. The night the board approved his appointment, he gave a party at his house for the artist Chuck Close. The party served numerous purposes, one of which, apparently, was to reinforce Ovitz's status as a prominent art collector among guests like Tom Hanks and Steven Spielberg, who might also want to do business with Disney. "Chuck Close was used as a centerpiece for the party because Disney is in the creative business and he is probably one of the four most important living artists in the world today," Ovitz later explained. "So to have a party in his honor, people thought it would be very good for a company that was not known to be particularly talent-friendly and to try to mix and match a lot of people that had worked in Disney movies, worked in Disney animation. I had theme-park people there. I had people from the Imagineering group and I mixed everybody up with directors. It was interesting. The Imagineering guys loved talking to Spielberg, because he was exclusive to Universal, and they sat and picked his brain."

The party cost about ninety thousand dollars, which Ovitz—who left expense-account details to one of his assistants—felt was a bargain, less than half what he would have spent had he still been at C.A.A.

Eisner was displeased by Ovitz's lavish entertaining and gift giving, and he asked both Litvack and Russell to monitor his expenses, to see if there were infractions of company policy. At one point, Eisner sent Russell a handwritten note saying, "Michael is obviously not reporting gifts," and, "He told me some of his stock pickers were buying Disney," suggesting that Ovitz might be inappropriately discussing Disney with brokers. Ovitz denies any wrongdoing.

Oblivious of Eisner's mounting concerns, Ovitz was confident that through hard work and enthusiasm he could create a role for himself despite the overt hostility of people like Litvack and Bollenbach, and the passive resistance of Roth. Ovitz worked twelve-hour days, often including Saturdays and Sundays. He always seemed to be doing two or three things at once, frequently interrupting meetings by making or receiving calls on his cell phone, arriving late or leaving early, cancelling appointments at the last minute. This was typical in the Hollywood of C.A.A., but at Disney every slight was tallied, and most were reported directly to Eisner.

In one incident, Ovitz managed to alienate both Bob Iger, the president of ABC, and Steve Bornstein, the head of ESPN. He had told Iger that he wanted to know everything about ESPN, and asked to meet Bornstein. Iger told Bornstein to work up a detailed presentation on the sports channel, which Bornstein had built into a hugely profitable franchise. When Ovitz arrived at Iger's office in New York for the meeting, he asked, "What is this? What's this meeting?"

Iger reminded him that he had requested it. Ovitz looked at his watch. "I see it's on the schedule for two hours. I only have fifteen minutes. Let's start, see how far we get, and then I can read the rest of the presentation."

The meeting began, and Bornstein started his PowerPoint presentation. Five minutes later, Ovitz excused himself to answer a call on his cell phone. "That was Tom Cruise," he said when he returned. "I'm afraid I can't do this now. Give me the deck and I'll read it, then I'll call with any questions." Iger, Bornstein, and Bornstein's staff had spent weeks getting ready. Bornstein never heard again from Ovitz.

Ovitz also had a habit of sitting next to Eisner at meetings and whispering to

THE SOLDIER WHO GUARDS THE FRONTIER

On the surface of the earth
despite all effort I continued
the life I had led in its depths.

So when you said cuckoo
hello and my heart
leapt up imagine my surprise.

From its depths some mouth
drawn by your refusals of love
fastened on them and fattened.

It's 2004; now the creature
born from our union in 1983
attains maturity.

He guards the frontier.
As he guards the frontier he listens
all day to the records of Edith Piaf.

Heroic risk, Piaf sings. Love
is heroic risk, for what you are impelled
to risk but do not

kills you; as does, of course this voice
knows, risk. He is addicted
to the records of Edith Piaf.

He lives on the aroma, the intoxications
of what he has been spared.
He is grateful, he says, not to exist.

—*Frank Bidart*

him, which infuriated others at the meetings. Eisner himself later testified that the gesture drove him crazy, and that he asked Ovitz to stop doing it.

After attempting unsuccessfully to negotiate a number of record and book-publishing deals for Disney subsidiaries—many were vetoed by Eisner—Ovitz began working on a three-billion-dollar joint venture that was to combine Disney's record label, Hollywood Records, with Sony's. Nobuyuki Idei, Sony's president, "has always been obsessed with Walt Disney," Ovitz explained, and he told Eisner that Idei's daughter had written her university dissertation on Mickey Mouse. Sony was interested in Disney's children's label—the only part of Hollywood Records with any significant market share—and, in return, Disney "would have been a competitor with an amazing catalogue and representing and recording some of the biggest artists around." Ovitz also thought the deal would enable Disney to book its recording acts into the theme parks and other venues, and give it an entrée into Sony's growing video-game business—exactly the kinds of synergies that Eisner often extolled. Ovitz sent Eisner a *U.S. News & World Report* article about the record business to help make his case, but Eisner replied with a memo disparaging the whole idea.

Ovitz assumed that, besides overseeing the recording and publishing businesses, he would be in charge of ABC, once Disney's acquisition of the company became final, the following February. He scheduled weekly meetings with Bob Iger and other top ABC officials. He flew to New York every week, usually on Sunday evening. He spoke to Iger on the phone every day.

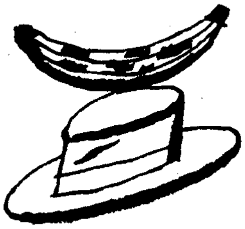
Early that fall, Ovitz, accompanied by Litvack and Bollenbach, spent a week in New York conducting an exhaustive review of ABC's businesses. They took over a large conference room and each division head made a presentation. In the end, the Disney group's main recommendations were to sell ABC's newspaper holdings and to either sell the radio division or make a large radio acquisition.

When the group returned to Los Angeles, Ovitz presented the recommendations in a meeting with Eisner. Eisner, Ovitz later testified, scoffed at the ideas, and asked the others in the group what they thought. They all agreed with Eisner, saying that selling any of the assets would be a mistake. Ovitz was floored. "Guys," he finally said. "We just spent five hours on the plane discussing this and agreeing on this." There was silence. Ovitz felt, he said later, that everyone in the room was looking at him as if he were crazy.

On another occasion, according to Ovitz, Eisner, sounding frantic, called him with the news that Tim Allen had angrily walked off the set of "Home Improvement." "He's a two-hundred-and-fifty-million-dollar asset," Eisner said. "You've got to get him back."

Ovitz immediately left his office and went to Allen's dressing room. He suggested that Allen calm down and take the rest of the day off. The next day, Ovitz invited him to lunch and listened patiently to his grievances. Ovitz subsequently gave a dinner party for Allen, which included Allen's wife, his lawyer, his manager, and a group of his friends. After Allen admired Ovitz's art collection, Ovitz bought him a gift: a print by Roy Lichtenstein, a friend of Ovitz's, that cost about twelve hundred dollars.

Allen returned to the set, and production of "Home Improvement" resumed. But when Ovitz asked to be reimbursed for the cost of the print Sandy Litvack suggested that reimbursing him would be unethical, and this further fuelled Eisner's suspicions about Ovitz's standards. As Ovitz later described the encounter, Litvack "got very upset with me and angry and said I didn't know how to work in a public company, and he embarrassed me in front of a number of people and he told me that I was not very bright about these things and in a public company you can't buy gifts for people." He went on, "And I explained to Sandy that, if it is the rule, I found it to be ludicrous. I would be happy to pay for it myself. But I got Tim Allen to go back to work. He never missed another episode." (It isn't clear what was unethical about the gift. Eisner himself later testified that there was nothing wrong with Ovitz's giving Allen a gift on Disney's behalf.)



Ovitz's most ambitious attempted deal for Disney was also the most sensitive: to settle the long-running feud over Jeffrey Katzenberg's bonus, which Eisner had refused to pay when Katzenberg finally left Disney, in October, 1994. Ovitz met with Katzenberg, who seemed amenable to putting the dispute behind him, especially since he could use the money to help finance DreamWorks, his new venture with David Geffen and Steven Spielberg. According to Geffen, Ovitz negotiated through him, and reached an agreement to pay Katzenberg ninety million dollars. "It's reasonable, and it's the right number, and I'm going to do my best to close this deal," Ovitz told Geffen.

Eisner, backed by Sandy Litvack, vetoed the settlement. Ovitz couldn't believe what he was hearing. He recalls telling Eisner, "I'm not a lawyer. I may not be as smart as you, but can you please explain the rationale? You're going to run up twenty million dollars in legal fees. You could be on the hook for two hundred million." Ovitz continued, "Whatever you want to say, he worked his ass off for you. Now you're going to make him fight you to get his bonus? What kind of message does that send?"

Eisner said the matter was closed; he wasn't settling and he wasn't paying Katzenberg anything. Ovitz called Geffen and then Katzenberg to say that he'd failed to sell the deal to Eisner and Litvack. He felt that they took the news calmly, but their comments were withering. "It's obvious you report to Sandy Litvack," Geffen said. "This isn't the old you. You could close anything. You could get it done. Now you have no credibility." Katzenberg sounded almost sympathetic. "This is just the beginning," he said. "You have no idea what you're in for." (In July, 1999, after two courtroom proceedings that aired the most embarrassing aspects of the Eisner-Katzenberg feud, Disney agreed to pay Katzenberg not the ninety million dollars that Ovitz had negotiated but two hundred and eighty million.)

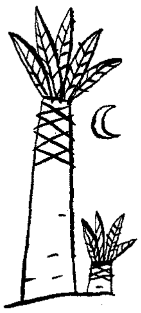
According to Sid Bass, Eisner informed him just five weeks into Ovitz's tenure that he wanted to fire Ovitz. The only reason he was holding off, Eisner told Bass, was that he thought Ovitz would commit suicide. Even then, Bass recalled, Eisner indicated that he was going to keep Ovitz only for twelve more months, and that he would have to be fired no later than October of the following year. Eisner complained repeatedly to Bass that Ovitz was unethical and untrustworthy, and that he had suggested lying as a "modus operandi." (Eisner subsequently testified that Bass was mistaken, and that the conversation took place later in Ovitz's tenure.)

All this time, though, the Eisners and the Ovitzes continued their social lives together: they spent time in Aspen and in Los Angeles; Jane Eisner and Judy Ovitz remained best friends. In an October 20, 1995, letter to "Board Members, Bass Family and Jane," Eisner showered Ovitz with praise:

> Michael Ovitz joined me in Paris. Let me just say right here, boy are we lucky!!!! Even though he is going to read this letter, his coming to Disney was a great coup for us and a saving grace for me. Everybody is excited being with him, doing business with him, enjoying his energy and knowledge, sense of humor and enthusiasm.

The Ovitzes and the Eisners spent both Christmas Eve and Christmas Day together in Aspen. On Christmas Eve, Eisner gave Ovitz a handwritten note:

> 1996 is going to be a great year—we are going to be a great team—we every day are working better together. . . . And I think it will be fun because both our hearts are in the right place and pumping. I have a lot to learn from you. . . . Everybody knows we are winners. Every day I am thankful we are together.



In January of 1996, Tom Murphy, the former C.E.O. of Capital Cities/ABC, joined the Disney board, as did Ovitz, on Eisner's recommendation. In a typewritten note to Ovitz that month, Eisner praised him as "professional, attractive and competent," and added, "Like a marriage, we are doing wonderfully to the outside world."

But there were some ominous signs. For one thing, Eisner was upset that Ovitz had wished Sid Bass a happy New Year. "I really must know what you're up to," Eisner wrote. "It's not enough that you have your secretary call to say that you wished Sid Bass a happy New Year. Hearing from a secretary . . . puts me in a dark position." It was one of many indications that Eisner did not want Ovitz to speak to Bass or any other board members. "These small but aggravating problems pale in comparison to how well you are operating," Eisner continued, "but it's just little things like respecting my relationship to my bosses, the Basses and the board. . . . You are squeezing the toothpaste from the middle. It's one way to get paste, but not the way for me."

According to Ovitz, in May, 1996, he and Eisner had dinner alone, and Ovitz said that he disliked his job; that Eisner had undercut him at every step; that he knew Iger, Roth, and other people were going behind his back and that Eisner did nothing to discourage it. "You put me in a position, I gave up the agency, I came to the company, and everything I did you negated—everything," he said. He enumerated the failed deals and opportunities. One particularly raw episode had occurred in April, when an NBC executive, Don Ohlmeyer, had publicly accused Ovitz of leaking an unflattering story about him and called him "the Antichrist." Ovitz denied spreading the rumor, but Eisner had refused to take his side, and ordered him to apologize to Jack Welch, the chairman of NBC's corporate owner, G.E. "I don't have a job," Ovitz concluded. "Just give me something to run."

Eisner said he wasn't "ready"; Ovitz was still a dealmaker, not an "operator." He lectured him again about the higher ethical standards of a public company.

In June, Ovitz put his mounting grievances into a seven-page handwritten letter. "For me, it's just not right," he said of his position at Disney. "I really have nothing to do." Ovitz mocked the idea of calling the executive offices the Team Disney building. "You're a team destroyer, not a team builder," he said. "I've had enough trouble inheriting your fights and enemies. Every day somebody complains to me about something. . . . It's okay because it is human and healthy. . . . I've always had one goal, which is to protect you, the company and our relationship. . . . Maybe you cannot have a partner. You have failed with everyone over the years. You hated Diller. You constantly complained about him even when you went to Disney. You couldn't stand Frank or his work habits for the first five years and told Judy and me how hard it was."

According to Ovitz, Eisner stormed into his office brandishing the letter—one of the few times he ever entered Ovitz's office. "I never badmouthed Frank Wells!" he said. "Never! And I never badmouthed Barry Diller."

"Sit down and listen to yourself," Ovitz replied. "You know that is a goddam lie. You can't rewrite history." Ovitz thought of all the times that he and Judy and Jane had listened to Eisner rant about Wells and Diller. "Do you want me to put you on the phone to my wife and Jane to prove it?"

"No, no." Eisner backed down. "But we need to talk this out."

"The letter is how I feel," Ovitz said. "Read it again after you calm down. Then we can discuss it."

They did discuss it—ad nauseam, as Ovitz later recalled—but Ovitz wouldn't retract any of it. The more they talked, the angrier Eisner seemed to get.

Still, Eisner spoke warmly of Ovitz and his family at Ovitz's daughter's bat mitzvah, in July. Ovitz had rented the House of Blues restaurant in Hollywood for the bat-mitzvah party; Ovitz was a friend of Dan Aykroyd, who was a part owner of the chain. But Ovitz claims that Eisner subsequently called him in and demanded to know if he had paid for the event himself, and that Litvack had brought to Eisner's attention the fact that Disney had a small stake in the House of Blues, and suggested that Ovitz's use of a facility that was partly owned by Disney was a violation of company policy. (Eisner and Litvack have denied this.) Ovitz says he hadn't even known that Disney had an interest in the restaurant, and, in any case, he'd paid the restaurant its usual charge (and later produced his cancelled check to prove it). Nevertheless, Eisner continued to cite the House of Blues affair as an example of Ovitz's unethical behavior.

On July 31st, Eisner's mother died, at the age of seventy-nine. The funeral was held the next day at Temple Emanu-el on Fifth Avenue in Manhattan. Ovitz and his wife attended, and when they emerged from the service Ovitz noticed that a car idling at the curb was preventing the hearse from pulling up to the entrance. Ovitz went over to the car and asked the driver to move. The driver refused, and, according to Ovitz, they exchanged some sharp words before a security guard intervened. The car finally drove away, the hearse pulled up, and the pallbearers emerged with the casket.

"You'll be awake during the entire procedure. The anesthesiologist is on vacation."

• •

Although Eisner had not witnessed any of this, he later testified that it was a pivotal moment in his thinking about Ovitz: "Somebody was driving a car and he thought they were in the way of the hearse and he made a giant scene and everybody reported it to me. It just—I was not in the mood to deal with it or to be too understanding about it. . . . I just thought I have to inform somebody that this cannot be my replacement."

In the following days, a solution occurred to Eisner. Ovitz was still trying to salvage a deal with Sony to merge the record division, and in late September he had arranged a meeting at the Pierre Hotel, in New York, with Idei, Norio Ohga, Sony's chairman, and Eisner. During the three-hour dinner, Ohga talked at length about Ovitz's good relationship with Sony. "You're so lucky to have him," Ohga told Eisner. "Good managers are hard to find."

According to Ovitz, Eisner grew increasingly restless. Afterward, he excoriated Ovitz. "It took you three hours to get to two minutes of real negotiation," he complained. "Why couldn't you get to the point?" Ovitz tried to explain that patience was essential when negotiating with the Japanese. "That's bullshit," Eisner said. Still, he seemed impressed by their respect for Ovitz: "They really like you. I bet they'd hire you." Eisner seemed taken with this idea. "Why not?" he continued. "You could run their operations here in the U.S. It's a great idea for you." It was obvious to Ovitz that Eisner wanted to get rid of him, and this provided a face-saving excuse. He told Eisner that he'd think about it.

The Disney board was scheduled to meet at Walt Disney World at the end of September, and Eisner has testified that he had prepared the board by telling some directors about the proposed solution in advance.

Eisner wrote a long letter to Irwin Russell and Ray Watson, his closest confidants on the board, along with Stanley Gold. Ovitz "seems manic and for many reasons is ill-equipped to lead The Walt Disney Company," he wrote. "If I should be 'hit by a truck,' the company simply cannot make him CEO. . . . It would be catastrophic!" The letter continued:

> I hate saying that but his strength of personality together with his erratic behavior and pathological problems (and I hate saying that) is a mixture leading to disaster for this company. . . . The mistake was mine, totally and completely. Maybe I suspected it at the time, but my desire to bring in a strong number two executive, my desire to satisfy my wife's honest request that I get help, my desire to appear not threatened by strong executives, my desire to seek experienced help to run ABC, and my desire to do what was right for Disney, all clouded my basic instinct that I was making a mistake . . .
>
> Michael does not have the trust of anybody. I do not trust him. None of the people he works with feels comfortable with his directness and honesty . . . he cannot tell the truth. He says whatever comes to his mind, no matter what the reality . . . I had hoped it was me, that I was dealing badly with some kind of Shakespearean threat from inside the company. It is not. I am sure I am not without political anxiety, but this is not that. Michael Ovitz simply is not a corporate executive.

Eisner later testified that he told the board at its September meeting that Ovitz had to go. Obviously, Eisner wasn't going to inform the full board at its regular meeting, which would be attended by Ovitz, so he pressed the point at various lunches and dinners with directors where Ovitz wasn't present. He also testified that at an executive session of the board, he said, "You should know that I'm probably going to work from now on at getting rid of him rather than rehabilitate him." He maintained that, one way or another, he told all the directors about his decision. (Eisner later qualified that recollection. "I just can't remember whether it was at an executive session or I just let each of the directors know . . . but I know it transpired.")

On September 30th, Eisner appeared with Ovitz on CNN's "Larry King Live." On the show, he denied that he had any problems with Ovitz, and suggested that false rumors of a rift between them were being planted by unspecified enemies. "There has not been one story where one person is quoted directly about any problems inside our company," Eisner said. "It's just all baloney. The fact of the matter is we, together, have almost as many enemies as Saddam Hussein and so it's very difficult not to have this kind of gossiping."

The following week, Litvack appeared unexpectedly in Ovitz's office, waited for him to get off the phone, and sat down. Ovitz recalls him saying, "I'm here to tell you that Michael doesn't want you in the company. You're being terminated."

Ovitz said, "Is this you, Sandy, speaking or is Michael aware of this?"

"Michael is the one who sent me here to do this," Litvack responded. Ovitz, furious and deeply hurt at Eisner's betrayal, later testified that Litvack "took great joy in telling me to leave. . . . I was sure that he was enjoying every second of it."

"If Michael wants to fire me and end my contract with the company, he'd better come in and tell me himself, because I'm not going to accept your word or your position," Ovitz said.

"Well, you are not to be here. And we are . . . "

Ovitz cut him off. "Sandy, you are going to have to pull me out of here. I'm not leaving."

Ovitz went out of the office and walked alone around the Disney campus. He knew that Litvack had disliked him from his first day at the company; perhaps he was trying to force something on his own. If Eisner was behind it, he wondered who else knew. If Eisner hadn't told anyone else, perhaps Ovitz could still change his mind. He later testified, "I wasn't going to let them beat me. I was going to make it work."

Later that afternoon, Ovitz went into Eisner's office and closed the door. He says Eisner acknowledged that he had sent Litvack to fire him. "How could you?" Ovitz asked. "After thirty years of friendship, how could you?"

Eisner was silent. Finally, he said, "We need to resolve this. We need to put a good face on this."

"Well, I'm not going anywhere," Ovitz replied. "You made a lot of promises to me before I came here. I'm still learning. You can't cut this off right now. You can't fire me. You've got to give me more time to integrate. I'm not giving up on this." With a tinge of bitterness, he added, "I'm just finally understanding how this place runs."

When Eisner did not reply, Ovitz walked out of the office.

In a letter dated October 8th, Ovitz wrote to Eisner, "It seems to me that you would be much happier if I were not with the company. To that end, I guess I should try to explore other possibilities."

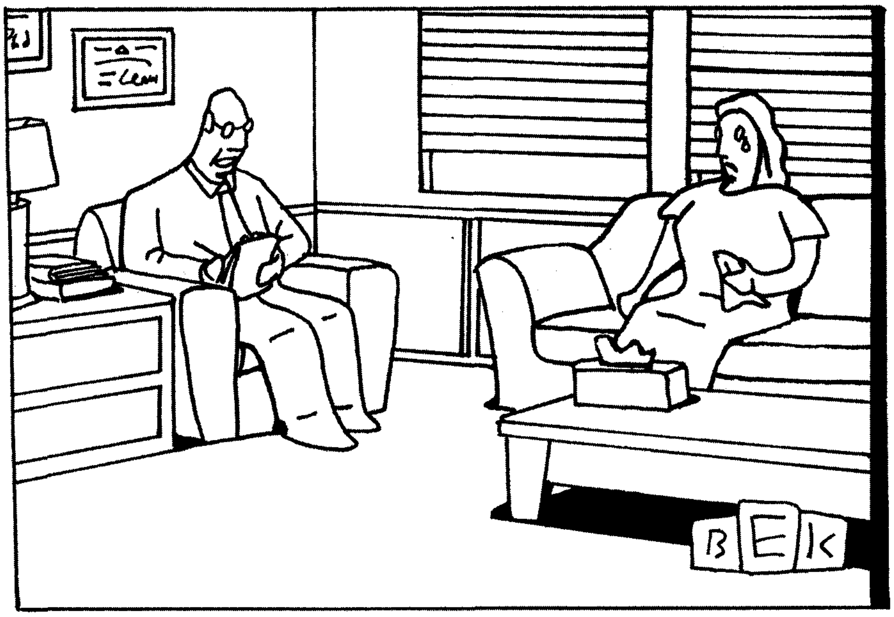
Eisner replied by handwritten note the same day:

> MICHAEL,
>
> I read your note and I really appreciate the spirit in which it is written—in light of all our conversations, I am sure you realize that I do not object to you trying to work out a deal for yourself with Sony. . . . I am committed to making this a win-win situation, to keep our friendship intact, to be positive, to say and write only glowing things—all this will be assured for both of us if we remain honest and reasonable and direct. Nobody ever needs to know anything other than positive things from either of us. This all can work out! You still are the only one who came to my hospital bed—and I do remember.
>
> MICHAEL

Over the next several weeks, Eisner embarked on a campaign to get Sony to hire Ovitz. Eisner seems to have given no thought to being "honest and reasonable" with the Japanese, and instead embraced a strategy that was flagrantly at odds with reality. "I was actually talking to Sony myself," Eisner later explained, "telling them that I would be very reluctant to lose Michael Ovitz to Sony, that they would have to pay one hundred per cent of the compensation that Disney owed him. And that I was only doing it because Michael Ovitz—you can't really keep a No. 2 man from being No. 1. And that they would have to give us some deal, record deal or something. I was trying to make Sony believe that this was the last thing in the world that I wanted to do."

Ovitz wasn't at all sure that he wanted to work for Sony, but, feeling he had no alternative, he called Idei to postpone discussions of the joint venture and instead suggested that they discuss Ovitz's personal situation. To maintain secrecy, Ovitz flew first to San Francisco, rather than flying to Tokyo directly from Los Angeles, but several Disney employees were on the same flight and quickly deduced that something was afoot. The next day, Ovitz had lunch with Idei and Ohga at an elegant Sony residence in the heart of Tokyo. The lunch resulted in what Ovitz later described as a "non-offer offer," more of an expression of continued interest. But Ovitz had already decided that he didn't want to work for Sony. He was determined to stay and succeed at Disney. He left Tokyo at 5:30 P.M. and was in his office at Disney the next morning, less than thirty-six hours after leaving.

"When I was in Japan and I was at Sony and I was with these guys, I realized how much I wanted the Walt Disney thing to work for me and for Eisner and for everybody else," he later explained. "The asset base of the Disney Company provided me a better platform than the asset base of the Sony Company. And I would rather deal with the devil I knew than the devil I didn't know. And I didn't assume for a moment that the politics inside Sony would be any easier than the politics inside Disney. I figured that the only difference was that I didn't speak Japanese." On November 1st, Ovitz sent Eisner another handwritten note. "I have decided to end the discussions and recommit myself to you and Disney."



"Hey, I'm just messing with your head."

Eisner was angry that the deal had fallen through, and he blamed Ovitz for overreaching. But, when Eisner said yet again that Ovitz was going to have to leave, Ovitz responded that he was going to "chain himself to the desk."

On Halloween, Eisner met with Gary Wilson, Disney's former chief financial officer and Ovitz's best friend on the board (apart from Eisner himself), in an effort to enlist Wilson's help in getting Ovitz to face reality. He described the failure of the Sony plan, mentioned an aborted effort to get Ovitz appointed by President Clinton as a special trade representative, and finally concluded "that for the best of the company he would have to be fired. But I couldn't fire him because he wouldn't accept being fired."

During the fall, Ovitz came up with a new plan to save his job. He would use the Christmas holiday, when the Ovitz and Eisner families would be together in Aspen, to spend time alone with Eisner and persuade him to change his mind. He started work on an elaborate presentation that would highlight his achievements over the year, the initiatives he had taken, and the ways he planned to address Eisner's concerns in the future. Ovitz was convinced that if he could just hang on until December 14th—when he would turn fifty—he could win Eisner over. The Eisners were giving a party for him, as Ovitz had done for Eisner previously.

Thanksgiving was approaching, and the Eisners were staying at their house in Malibu. The Ovitzes had decided to spend Thanksgiving in the Caribbean, on a hundred-and-seventy-foot yacht, with a crew of twelve, that Ovitz owned jointly with Gary Wilson. Although Thanksgiving was Wilson's allotted time on the boat, at Eisner's urging he invited Ovitz and his family to share the holiday with him and his wife. During their five days together on the yacht, Ovitz unburdened himself about his plight at Disney. Unknown to Ovitz, Wilson reported the conversations to Eisner by cell phone, and Eisner took notes:

> Gary Wilson. 12/1/96. "Interesting. Hard to put in summary. In and out of focus. Wanted to talk. Got more focused. Attitude in general equals 'wounded animal in a corner.' [illegible] Loyal friend, devastating enemy. Severely wounded. Blames problem on MDE and people around me—Litvack, Dreyer, etc. Feels he can do job has not been given a fair chance—attitude will have dangerous consequences.
>
> "Judy is emotional. Devastated about—feel betrayed—she blames herself—feel she convinced him."

Encouraged by the reports from Wilson that Ovitz was willing to discuss a settlement, Eisner summoned Ovitz to his office the week after Thanksgiving and told him that they had to negotiate a settlement of his contract. Ovitz seemed to agree, and Eisner reported in a letter to Irwin Russell, "I met with Michael Ovitz today who wants to bring our discussions to a conclusion this week. Wants you and Bob Goldman"—Ovitz's financial adviser—"to settle out his contract immediately and sign it by week's end." Despite Eisner's interpretation of the meeting, Ovitz had still not accepted the fact that he was being fired. Even as he authorized Goldman and his lawyers to begin negotiations on his behalf, he clung to the notion that, if he could hang on a few more days, he'd be able to turn things around.

Eisner kept various board members informed of these developments, and at trial recently he testified that the board met in executive session on November 25th to discuss firing Ovitz, though there was no vote and no notes were taken.

Remarkably, at a December 10th meeting of the Executive Performance Plan Committee, which determined executive bonuses, the committee voted to give Ovitz a bonus for 1996 of seven and a half million dollars. Irwin Russell argued then that Ovitz "had performed diligently according to his particular mode of operation even though we had determined that it had not been effective for the company." Eisner had met with Russell on December 6th, and Russell's notes indicate that Eisner thought Ovitz should get the bonus if he "keeps his mouth shut." (Disney revoked the bonus a few days later, but, of course, Ovitz ultimately received a termination settlement of a hundred and forty million dollars.)

As for Eisner, the compensation committee voted to give him a new, ten-year contract. His base salary remained seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars, though his bonus formula, tied to an increase in earnings per share, was potentially more generous. (Eisner earned a bonus of eight million dollars in 1996.) The key element, however, was a grant of stock options worth an estimated $770.9 million. The financial newsletter *Executive Compensation Reports* cited it as the richest option grant ever given a chief executive.

The night of December 12th, both Eisner and Ovitz were in New York, and Eisner summoned Ovitz to a meeting at his late mother's apartment at the Pierre Hotel. Eisner had decided that he couldn't delay any longer. When Ovitz arrived, he showed him a press release announcing his departure "by mutual consent."

Even then, Ovitz was convinced that he'd have another chance to present his case. Neither Ovitz nor Eisner could later recall the substance of their discussion that night. Eisner remembered only that he stressed public relations: "Kind of like, let's say nice things about each other; we will play up the friendship thing." Ovitz did vividly remember that at the end of the discussion Eisner said that he was looking forward to Ovitz's birthday party, and hoped that this "wouldn't affect their personal relationship."

Ovitz left the Pierre at 1 A.M. and walked the short distance to his New York apartment, at Metropolitan Tower, on Fifty-seventh Street. When he got there, a letter had already been hand-delivered to him, confirming the terms of his separation from Disney. It was signed by Sandy Litvack.

The next morning, Ovitz flew to Los Angeles, gathered members of his family, and retreated to Aspen. There was no fiftieth-birthday party. Ovitz spent December of 1996 alone with his family; for the first time in years, the Ovitzes did not join the Eisners for Christmas. After the holidays, Ovitz's wife and children returned to Los Angeles, but Ovitz stayed in Aspen, alone, for another month. He was too humiliated to face anyone in Los Angeles, and he never returned to his office at Disney. The career of the man known as the most powerful individual in Hollywood was effectively destroyed.♦

LIFE AND LETTERS

ORPHEUS AT THE PLOUGH

The father of "Little Women."

BY GERALDINE BROOKS

On a cool day in June of 1843, in Concord, Massachusetts, Bronson Alcott loaded a horse-drawn wagon and set off with his family and several like-minded believers to establish a community called Fruitlands. They were to live on the fruits of the land fourteen miles away, in a cramped farmhouse that dated from Colonial times and was badly in need of renovation. Louisa May Alcott, then ten, rode beside her mother, Abigail, and her two younger sisters while Anna, the eldest daughter, trudged alongside. The wagon carried few agricultural supplies, but Alcott had found room for his bust of Socrates.

Alcott had examined, and judged inadequate, the various utopian experiments springing up throughout New England in reaction to the industrial age. He had scorned the most famous of the communes, Brook Farm, near Boston, because his fellow-transcendentalists allowed consumption of milk; Alcott believed that milk belonged to the calf, just as wool was the rightful property of the sheep. He expected the Fruitlanders to endure a New England winter clad only in linen tunics spun from flax plants. He eschewed cotton and sugar—products of slave labor. He intended that no beasts should be enslaved to the plow at Fruitlands; the fields would be tilled by spade alone and fertilized without the benefit of animal manures.

Alcott was esteemed by the leading intellectual lights of the day. Ralph Waldo Emerson called him "the most extraordinary man and highest genius of the time." To Henry David Thoreau, he was "the sanest man . . . of any I chance to know." Margaret Fuller hailed him as "a philosopher worthy of the palmy days of ancient Greece." Alcott's writings had fuelled Emerson's thought during the composition of his seminal essay "Nature." Alcott was also an influence for Thoreau's famous anti-slavery protest; he withheld tax and was arrested three years before Thoreau's similar actions led to the tract "Civil Disobedience." But Alcott was more than simply an inspiration to his intellectual neighbors. He was a founder of Boston's first white anti-slavery society; he sheltered runaway slaves and braved gunfire to protest the Fugitive Slave Act. As a teacher, he had been responsible for a radical and highly influential rethinking of education.

Yet, if Alcott is remembered at all, it is usually as the improvident loser whose daughter was the author of "Little Women" and who lived as a parasite on her earnings. None of Louisa May Alcott's twentieth-century biographers are kind to Bronson: at best, he is portrayed as hapless, at worst abusive. Martha Saxton's "Louisa May" is particularly severe. Saxton applies her nineteen-seventies feminist eye to the Victorian-era Alcotts and sees only dysfunction: Louisa is a browbeaten victim of a father who didn't love her; her literary life is a joyless enslavement brought about by the necessity of providing for her neglected mother and siblings. How did Bronson Alcott become such a belittled man?

Biographers have made much of the fact that the father in "Little Women" is largely absent, although the rest of the fictional Marches are closely based on Alcott family members. Louisa May thinly disguises herself as the tomboy writer, Jo. Her dutiful older sister, Anna, becomes Meg; Elizabeth is the doomed Beth; and May is the blond-curled artist, Amy. Abigail, the girls' capable, social-activist mother, is rendered recognizably as Marmee. But the father in the novel is down South—"away where the fighting was"—from the first page of the novel, and when he finally limps home from the Civil War, more than a hundred pages later, Louisa May sends him off to his library and more or less closes the door. To read Bronson Alcott's journals and letters is to understand her difficulty: the truth about her father's character was far too odd and unorthodox to be shoehorned into an idealized, moralistic tale for Victorian children. Bronson Alcott was even more original, courageous, and visionary than his more famous contemporaries: the most transcendent transcendentalist of them all.

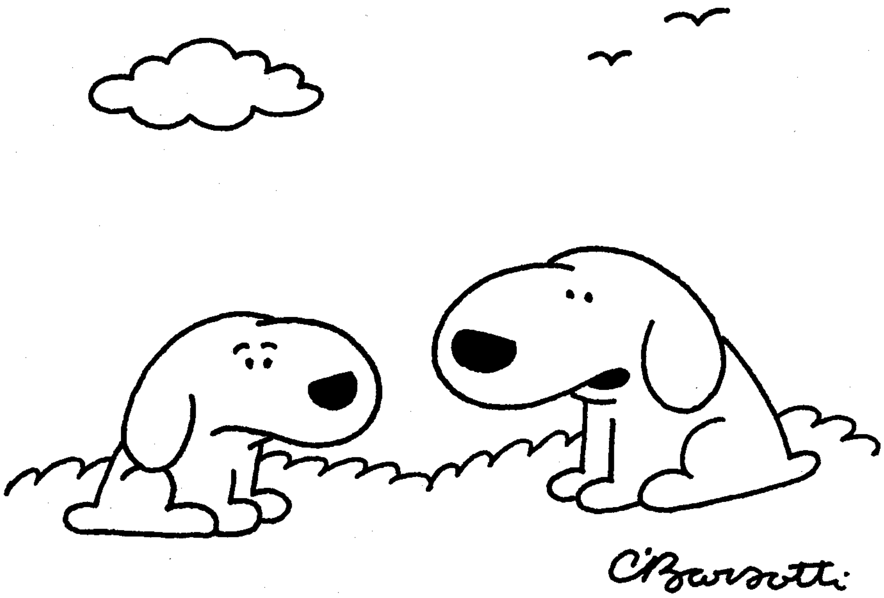
Born Amos Bronson Alcox on November 29,1799, on a farm of a few rough acres in the thin-soiled Connecticut hamlet of Spindle Hill, near Wolcott, the radical educator received a rudimentary formal schooling. The one-room schoolhouse he attended was dirty, freezing in winter and stifling in summer, and so poorly equipped that pupils were obliged to make their own ink. The rod and the ferule were often employed.

Somehow, Amos Alcox already had a wider vision of learning; he and a cousin embarked on their own project of self-education, writing and critiquing each other's journals, which they made from scraps of paper crudely sewn together. Lacking access to a library, they scoured surrounding farms in quest of books to borrow. The one that made the deepest impression was "The Pilgrim's Progress." Many years later, Alcott wrote in his journal that the book "gave me to myself. . . . I thought and spoke through it. It was my most efficient teacher."

Such schooling as he had ended when he was thirteen. He worked on the family farm and in a clock factory before heading off at eighteen for Virginia. Despite his scant credentials, he hoped to find a community that might employ him as a teacher. Unsuccessful, he turned to peddling. He bought trunks in Norfolk, filled them with tortoiseshell combs, sewing needles, and other notions that might tempt the wives of planters, and

CONCORD FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY

A pioneering educator admired by Emerson and Thoreau, Bronson Alcott founded a rural utopian commune, with mixed results.



"It's just a theory, but perhaps it's their opposable thumbs that makes them crazy."

• •

set out on foot to explore the byways of Virginia and the Carolinas. Tall, blond, and charming, with arresting blue eyes, he was well received in the great houses along the York and James Rivers. The "cultivated opulent families of the Old Dominion," as he described them in his journal, introduced him to art and music, architecture and refined manners. "The planters are an educated class, gentlemen in the best sense of the word," he wrote to his cousin in a letter. "I pass many an evening at their hospitable homes." Their high style raised his aspirations. That the leisured life of the mind he so admired was made possible by the exploitation of slave labor did not, at that time, prevent him from using his experiences as a kind of finishing school. He shed his hayseed accent and terse Yankee diction, changed his name to the refined-sounding A. Bronson Alcott, and adopted what Thomas Cholmondeley, a visiting Englishman, later described as "the manners of a very great Peer."

Back North at the age of twenty-three, the young man used his acquired polish to secure a teaching post at last. Early in this new career, he read about the ideas of the Swiss educator Johann Pestalozzi, who stressed the inherent intellectual gifts of children and deplored corporal punishment. These ideas became his bedrock, and Alcott elaborated them as best he could as master at a series of Connecticut village schools, where the pupils in his care ranged in number from about fifteen to more than eighty and in age from about four to twelve.

Instead of drilling these farm children on weights and measures, Alcott asked them for their views on their souls. "Truth is spherical," Alcott wrote, "and seen differently according to the culture, temperament and disposition of those who survey it." He did not feel that he was the sole teacher in the room, believing that the thoughts of children could also be instructive.

At a time when Boston's Educational Institute instructed that teaching consisted of "breaking the will" and "subduing the spirit," Alcott's methods soon attracted attention. In the Boston *Recorder and Telegraph* in May, 1827, an article deploring the general run of Connecticut's schools singled out Alcott's in Cheshire as "the best common school in the State, perhaps in the United States." Reports of his work caught the notice of Samuel May, a Unitarian minister, abolitionist, and descendant of notable Bostonians. "I at once felt assured the man must be a genius, and that I must know him more intimately," wrote May, who urged the schoolmaster to visit. Afterward, he proclaimed Alcott "a born sage and saint . . . radical in all matters of reform." He could not think when he had "been so immediately taken possession of by any man I have ever met." Samuel's sister Abigail evidently felt the same, and commenced to court Alcott with a purposefulness uncommon for women of that era. They married in 1830. Anna was born the following year, and Louisa May twenty months later, on Bronson's thirty-third birthday. Bronson observed his infants closely and in detailed journals recorded the development of each new mind.

With May's backing, Alcott was invited to run small, private, Quaker-influenced schools in Boston and Philadelphia. In September, 1834, he opened the school that would make, and then break, his reputation: the Temple School in Boston. Here he could finally put his theories to work in full. He went into debt to insure that the classroom contained "paintings, busts, books, and not inelegant furniture." The books had to be "fine copies," even if that meant sending away to England for superior editions. He lamented that most books were concerned only with the lives of adults, and wished there were better books written specifically for the child: "The facts of his experience have, as yet, found no expression in literature." He speculated about one day writing such a book, or guiding someone who would do so.

Alcott treated his pupils as if they were valued friends. "A child should be approached with reverence," he wrote. If a pupil misbehaved, he would present his own hand and instruct the miscreant to apply the ferule, saying that the fault lay chiefly with the teacher, who had not inspired sufficient self-discipline. The guilt this induced was probably worse than a whacking: Alcott's classes were orderly. He allowed ample time for play and physical exercise, which—another departure—he thought important for girls as well as boys.

The school attracted the offspring of Boston's wealthy intellectuals. The initial enrollment of eighteen pupils had doubled by its second year. Alcott's illustrious assistants, Elizabeth Peabody and Margaret Fuller, took verbatim notes on much of what passed in the classroom, including the remarkable "conversations" in which Alcott proposed a subject and tried to draw out the children's views. The children taking part in the following conversation range in age from six to twelve:

MR. ALCOTT: What do you mean by Judgment Day?

ELLEN: The last day, the day when the world is to be destroyed.

MR. ALCOTT: When will that day come?

CHARLES: The day of judgment is not any more at the end of the world than now. It is the judgment of conscience every moment.

MR. ALCOTT: Ellen is thinking of burning worlds, open books, a Judge, an assembled universe.

LUCIA: I think the day of judgment is when anyone dies; the conscience judges.

JOSEPH: Mr. Alcott, it does not mean any particular day; but they wanted to express how very certain and real the judgment is which goes on all the time, and so they expressed it in this way, for no words can exactly express it.

Emerson, who had been introduced to Alcott in 1835, visited the school in June of 1836 and heard a similar conversation. He wrote in his journal, "I felt strongly, as I watched the gradual dawn of thought upon the minds of all, that to truth is no age or season. It appears, or it does not appear; and when the child perceives it he is no more a child. Age, sex, are nothing." A greater testimonial, in a way, is this excerpt from the journal of one ten-year-old pupil: "I was not very attentive the first part of the conversation, as I got thinking about other things, such as percussion caps, etc.; but the conversation soon interested me a great deal more than the percussion caps." That the children felt free to speak without fear of ridicule is clear in numerous exchanges. At one point, Alcott asks what they believe to be their souls' mission in this life. The eloquent Charles Morgan, aged about eleven and the son of a whale-oil merchant, replies, "I think the mission of my Soul is to sell oil."

One of Alcott's most accomplished interlocutors was six-year-old Josiah Quincy, whose father had been the mayor of Boston and whose grandfather had been the president of Harvard. Peabody noted that it was a blessing that the boy stuttered, because otherwise she would not have been able to transcribe in full his remarkable outbursts, such as the following:

MR. ALCOTT: Can you say to yourself, I can remove this mountain?

JOSIAH: (Burst out) Yes, Mr. Alcott! I do not mean that with my body I can lift up a mountain—with my hand; but I can feel; and I know that my conscience is greater than the mountain, for it can feel and do; and the mountain cannot. There is the mountain, there! It was made, and that is all. But my conscience can grow. It is the same kind of spirit as made the mountain be, in the first place. I do not know what it may be and do. The body is a mountain, and the spirit says, be moved, and it is moved into another place. Mr. Alcott, we think too much about clay. We should think of spirit. I think we should love spirit, not clay. I should think a mother now would love her baby's spirit; and suppose it should die, that is only the spirit bursting away out of the body. It is alive; it is perfectly happy; I really do not know why people mourn when their friends die. I should think it would be a matter of rejoicing. For instance, now, if we should go into the street and find a box, an old dusty box, and should put into it some very fine pearls, and bye and bye the box should grow old and break, why, we should not even think about the box. . . . I cannot see why people mourn for bodies.

MR. ALCOTT: Yes, Josiah; that is all true, and we are glad to hear it. Shall some one else now speak beside you?

JOSIAH: Oh, Mr. Alcott! Then I will stay in at recess and talk.

Perhaps encouraged by responses such as Emerson's, Alcott decided to publish "Conversations with Children on the Gospels," the first volume of which came out in 1836. He did not himself care for organized religion ("It is not my duty, I cannot so regard it, to attend the churches. My own spirit preaches sounder doctrine"), nor did he believe in the divinity of Jesus. But he thought the Gospels worthy of study, and children in his class often discussed them. His book provoked outrage. Bad enough that Alcott had given children the right to air ideas on religion, but to discuss the birth of Jesus using words like "conceived," "seed," and "flesh" appalled the clergy, who denounced Alcott from the pulpit, and the newspapers, which blasted his work as "blasphemous." Josiah Quincy had ventured that babies came into the world through "the naughtiness of other people." This, from a six-year-old, was held as evidence of Alcott's corruption of childhood purity.

Parents withdrew their children from the school. His income severely reduced, Alcott had to move his dimin-

THE ANCIENT TEMPLES OF BURMA
VISIT THE ANCESTRAL HOME
FIND THE LOST INCA BURIAL GROUNDS
DISCOVER THE HIDDEN CAVES OF KUMBOO
ELIZABETHAN ENGLAND
WEBER

"We just want a vacation—we don't want to learn anything."

ished class into his own home. In 1839, he enrolled an African-American girl. When he ignored a parents' démarche to dismiss the child, he was left with just five pupils—his own daughters, the son of a friend then lodging with him, and the black child. He was obliged to close.

"Come to Concord," Emerson wrote. "Our little river would run gentler and our meadows look greener to me, if such a thing could be." In 1836, Emerson, Alcott, and others had founded the Transcendental Club, a society of "mutual inquiry," which held early meetings in Alcott's parlor. That year, while writing "Nature," Emerson read Alcott's manuscripts extensively. He had a draft of Alcott's book on childhood, gleaned from observations of his infant daughters, and was impressed with its ideas, if severe on its stilted writing. He also read Alcott's journal for the year 1835, which he admired without reservation. Alcott's entry of December 21st could be a missing paragraph from "Nature," so closely did the two men's thought correspond: "I set out from the wide ground of Spirit. This is; all else is its manifestation. . . . Infinitude is too wide for man to take in. He is therefore permitted to take in portions and spread his vision over the wide circumference by little and little; and in these portions doth the Infinite shadow forth itself, God in all and all in God." In "Nature," Emerson both quotes and paraphrases Alcott, identifying him as "my Orphic poet." Alcott's ideas are scattered throughout the famous essay.

On April 1, 1840, the Alcotts, six thousand dollars in debt, moved from Boston to a run-down rented cottage within a mile of Emerson's fine house, on the Lexington Road. There, Emerson had promised, Alcott could have a garden to produce food, and still have time for writing and for giving an occasional "Conversation." Alcott had adapted his classroom exercise for adults, and his discussions on broad topics such as "Modern Life" attracted audiences of between thirty and seventy, bringing in a small income. Emerson attended frequently, and wrote, "His discourse soars to a wonderful height, so regular, so lucid, so playful, so new and disdainful of all boundaries of tradition and experience."

Within a month of moving to Concord, Alcott had transformed his acre and three-quarters: he had plowed, laid drainage, trellised, and planted. He hired himself out as a laborer in mowing season and chopped wood for a dollar a day. William Ellery Channing, lodestar of the transcendentalists, called him "Orpheus at the plough."

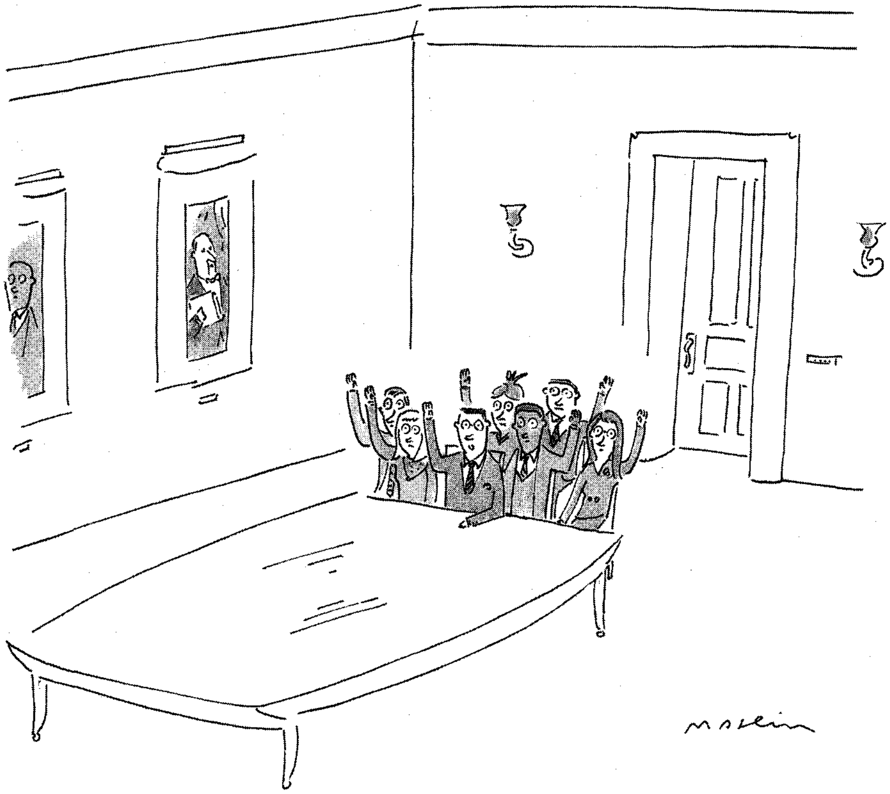
Around this time, the Transcendental Club launched its quarterly publication, *The Dial*. Alcott suggested the name, taking it from a poetic inscription in his own journal: "Dial on time thine own eternity." His contribution, "Orphic Sayings," did nothing for his battered reputation. "I fear he will never write as well as he talks," Emerson lamented. Many of the Orphic Sayings were so oblique that meaning skidded entirely off the page. No. 43 read, "The popular genesis is historical. It is written to sense not to the soul. . . . God is dual. Spirit is derivative. Identity halts in diversity. Unity is actual merely." Not all were that bad; there were some, Emerson thought, that might "even pass for just great." Perhaps he meant No. 35: "Nature is not separate from me; she is mine alike with my body; and in moments of true life, I feel my identity with her; I breathe, pulsate, feel, think, will, through her members, and know of no duality of being." Or perhaps he admired the pithy No. 28: "Prudence is the footprint of Wisdom."

Prudence, of course, had never been Alcott's strong suit, which perhaps accounted for his friendship with Thoreau. "A very welcome guest, this countryman, who comes so scented of mountain breezes and springs, so like a luxuriant clod from under forest leaves, moist and mossy with earth-spirits," Alcott wrote. They were two heretics together, indifferent to the world's expectations and exercised by its injustices. In January, 1841, they debated in the Concord Lyceum: "Is it ever proper to offer forcible resistance?" At issue was slavery and how to combat it. Unlike Emerson, they were prepared to do more than just talk. Alcott led the way, withholding his tax—and getting arrested for it—in January of 1843, to protest Massachusetts's complicity and commerce with slave states. Thoreau wrote to Emerson, amused at his friend's pluck, and determined to follow suit, though it took three years for the state to notice. When

"Sometimes I give myself *the creeps."*

Emerson called Thoreau's protest "in bad taste," Alcott defended him. It was, he said, a good example of "dignified non-compliance with the injunction of civil powers."

At the ebb of his reputation as a writer and educator in his own land, Alcott unexpectedly learned that his writings had inspired a group of English reformers to open a boarding school called Alcott House, in Surrey. It would be an honor, they wrote, if their guiding spirit might visit. But how? There were no clothes for the new baby; Abigail's toes had worn through her boots. She was taking in sewing. Emerson, who wanted to give his dear friend "a pure success," offered to fund the trip. He could not know that he was delivering Bronson to a man who would come close to destroying their friendship and the Alcott marriage, and would push his friend into a near-suicidal depression.



"It's unanimous: effective immediately, we spread out around the table."

Alcott arrived in London in June, 1842, and was disgusted by most of what he saw there. The Tower was "a Golgotha," the Royal Academy was full of "portraits of horned and sanguinary Britons," St. Paul's was "overwrought with ornament," and the service at Westminster Abbey was "a spectacle merely... ignoble." He wrote to Abigail, "I am not at peace in this Lion's den, amidst beasts of prey."

But Alcott House was another matter. Charles Lane, the administrative head of the school, worked part time in London as a financial journalist. He met Alcott at his office and escorted him to the handsome dormered house and beautiful grounds where Alcott would stay for most of his four months in England. Remaindered editions of "Conversations with Children on the Gospels" might have been sold for trunk linings back home; here the book was revered as a kind of gospel itself.

The school was a great success, but Lane and Henry Wright, who taught there, had grander ambitions. Wright, Lane, and Lane's young son returned to Concord with Alcott on no less a mission than "the Generation of a new race of persons." They would look for some land on which they could create a "second Eden" and live outside the money economy, subsisting on whole grains, fruit, and water, taking frequent cold baths, and spending hours of every day in earnest study and exalted conversation.

Abigail was ready to befriend these men who appreciated her husband and had reinvigorated him, even though accommodating them meant that the six Alcotts had to squeeze themselves into one room and an alcove. Emerson took pity and invited the visitors to his home, but they were back within a week, with the thin-lipped Lane complaining that the Emersons' table was "too good for my simplicity." Lane's austerity went beyond diet. He criticized the girls' high-spirited frolics and implied that Abigail's open manner required more restraint. (She wrote in her journal, "I am almost suffocated in this atmosphere of restriction.") Even Wright rebelled against the harsh environment, particularly the "cold potatoes." He moved out, and got involved in an adulterous liaison that scandalized Lane. But, then, Lane was easily scandalized. He disapproved heartily of the thriving, hundred-strong Brook Farm community. The transcendentalists there were "playing away their youth and daytime in a miserable joyous frivolous manner." In short, Lane had Alcott's flaws—his narcissism, moral certitude, and impractical idealism—but none of Alcott's joyful, affectionate nature. Unlike Alcott, Lane was a celibate misogynist, with a failed marriage behind him and a suspicion of sexual intimacy. But, also unlike Alcott, he had two thousand dollars, and was willing to spend it to fund Alcott's visions.

Lane chose the Fruitlands property, rather than some available land closer to Concord, in order to put Alcott beyond reach of Emerson, whom he saw as "off the Railroad of progress" and a rival for Alcott's attention. Emerson took a dim view of the "Arcadian fanaticism" that was depleting Concord of many valued neighbors, and now Alcott had gone off with Lane to the most fanatic Arcadia of all. Emerson felt the loss of his favorite conversation partner, and visited within the month. The "new race of persons" whom he saw sharing the close quarters of the farmhouse were an odd lot: they included a twenty-year-old refugee from Brook Farm, who existed on a diet of apples and crackers; an English "Adam-

AN INNOCENT YOUNG WOMAN GOES OFF TO COLLEGE FOR THE FIRST TIME, ONLY TO DISCOVER THAT SOMEHOW... SOMEWHERE...
SOMEONE IS OUT THERE WATCHING
R-R-RING!
Hello? Who is this?
Nobody.
I know it's you, Mom.
What are you wearing?
A T-shirt and jeans.
Put on a sweater. It's going down to 55 tonight!
O.K. It's on.
It's not on. Put it on.
How do you know it's not on?
Oh-h-h... I have my ways.
I'm hanging up now.
All right. I'll call you in an hour.
R. Chast

ite" devoted to his right to be nude; and a single woman, of whom Louisa May wrote bluntly, "I hate her." Nonetheless, Emerson noted in his journal that he found the Alcotts "serene" in their new home. But he couldn't resist a tart coda: "I will not prejudge them successful. They look well in July. We will see them in December."

He was right. As the weather began to harden, the linen-clad Fruitlanders decamped severally, until the community consisted only of the Lanes and the Alcotts. In thrall to Lane's flatteries and fantasies, Bronson believed that it was only a matter of spreading the word, and so would go off with Lane on proselytizing jaunts, leaving Abigail and the children to bring in the sparse crops alone.

Some fragments have survived of the journal that Louisa May kept at Fruitlands, with passages tellingly annotated in her adult years. "Friday, Nov. 2nd—Anna and I did the work. In the evening Mr. Lane asked us, 'What is man?' These were our answers: A human being; an animal with a mind; a creature; a body; a soul and a mind. After a long talk we went to bed very tired." Her adult annotation reads, "No wonder, after doing the work and worrying their little wits with such lessons."

Lane was harping increasingly upon celibacy, insisting that Bronson's devotion to the married state was stifling his spiritual development. Abigail, within the confines of Victorian discretion, confided in a letter to her brother that something unwholesome was going on. "I see no clean, healthy, safe course here in connexion with Mr. L," she wrote. She may have been hinting that Lane felt some homoerotic attraction toward Bronson. Or perhaps she felt that he was trying to push her out of the way, just as he had disrupted the long ties of friendship with Emerson.

Finally, with supplies and tempers running out, she forced a choice. She intended to leave with her daughters: Bronson could come away with them or not. Bronson appealed to the girls for their opinion. Louisa May was direct. She liked Fruitlands, she said, but not Mr. Lane. Lane tried one last throw: he and his son would leave Fruitlands and join the celibate Shakers. Bronson, if he aspired to true spiritual greatness, would go with them.

Bronson chose his family, although when the Lanes left he sank into depression and almost starved himself to death. In January, having "ate our last bit and burnt our last chip," as Abigail wrote to her brother, they begged a neighboring farmer to fetch them out of their snowbank and away from Fruitlands forever. "We put our four little women on an ox-sled, and made our way to Concord," Bronson recalled many years later. "So faded one of the dreams of my youth."

The fiasco of Fruitlands and the perception that he had abused his family there damaged Bronson Alcott's reputation permanently. Yet the Alcott marriage recovered from those months and the hard year of regrouping that followed. Back in Concord by 1844, Bronson renovated a house that had been literally a pigsty and turned it into the cozy retreat, Hillside, that Louisa May would lovingly describe in "Little Women."

At around this time, Alcott helped Thoreau raise the roof of his Walden cabin, and Thoreau's account of him in the original manuscript of "Walden" (which differs from the published versions) reveals an Alcott at peace and valued by his friend:

> I think that he should keep an inn, a caravansery, on the world's highway, where the thinkers of all nations might put up, and on his sign should be written . . . "Enter all ye that have leisure and a quiet mind, who earnestly and without anxiety seek the right road." A thought floats as serenely and as much at home in his mind as a duck pluming herself on a far inland lake. . . . Ah, such discourse as we had—hermit and philosopher. . . . It expanded and cracked my little house.

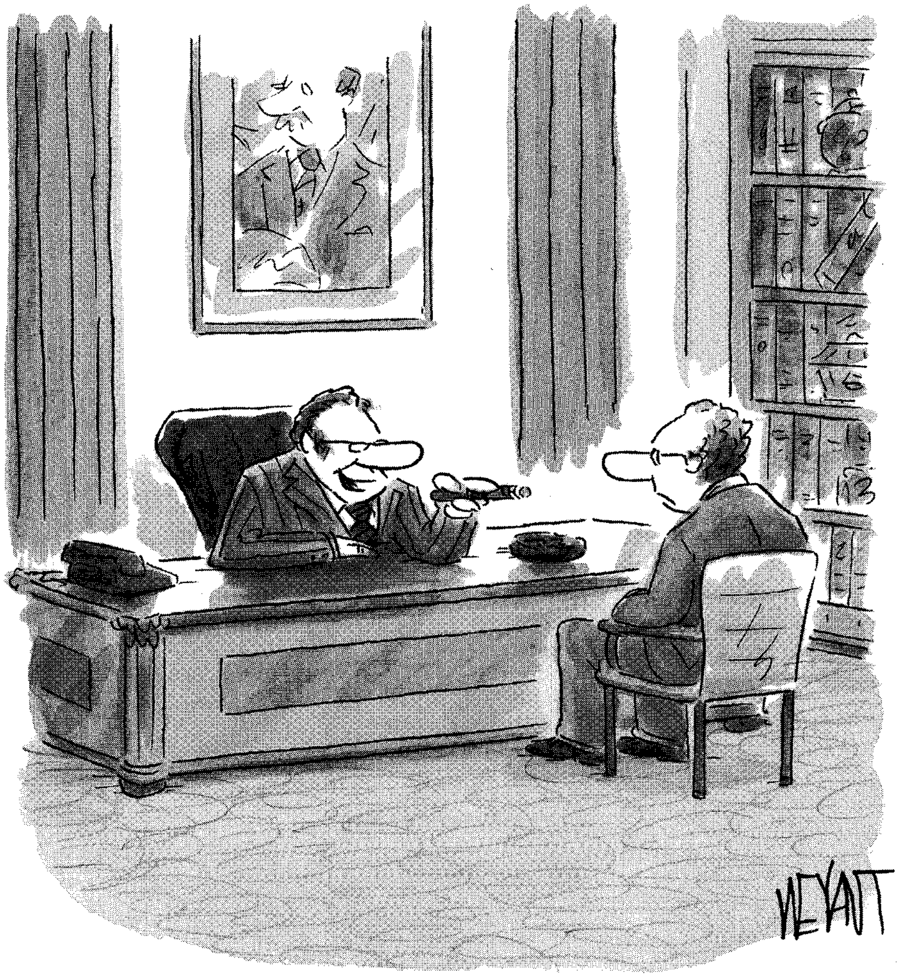
For the next decade, Alcott continued to earn only a pittance, giving occasional Conversations, and building a remarkable summerhouse for Emerson. (Its Oriental-looking rafters, "aspiring in handsome curves," as Bronson put it, caused some townsfolk to describe it as "a whirligig.") But he and Abigail together provided a rich life for their girls. Deprived of a school, he made his home into one, reading Heracleitus at their bedtime, urging them to refresh themselves "every day with a little French or German, as regularly as you go to the bath," and providing a willing audience at their theatricals. The family moved a short distance, to Orchard House, where the youngest, May, was encouraged to draw on the walls or to try her hand at poker work on the kitchen breadboards. For Louisa, he built a half-moon desk, pleasantly situated between two windows looking across Lexington Road to the fields in which he labored. It was there, in her twenties and early thirties, that she wrote her potboiler stories for popular magazines, and, in 1863, the Civil War nursing memoir, "Hospital Sketches," which was her first great success.

Bronson was an unwavering fan of her writing, even when he was the butt of her satire. In her story "Transcendental Wild Oats," the Fruitlands episode is wittily revisited, including the unfortunate day when "some call of the Oversoul wafted all the men away" right at harvest time. Rather than being offended, Bronson praised "the boldness and truthfulness of her strokes. . . . Louisa, in her story, makes the best of her materials."

All the more unfair, then, that Alcott's reputation should have suffered on account of his daughter's success. "Little Women" was published in 1868. It was an opportune time; the literacy gap between men and women was closing, with the white women of urban New England perhaps the most literate in the world. Such developments were exactly what Alcott had labored to bring about. He had wanted to guide someone who could write books that spoke to the child's true experience, and he had wanted to educate just such an audience of literate women to receive them. And now first-wave feminists, organized in the suffrage movement, which he also supported, were ready to elevate an iconic woman writer. Two thousand copies of "Little Women" sold in the first month. The money was certainly welcome: her royalties soared as high as thirty-three thousand dollars in one four-year period.

Yet by this time Alcott himself was earning a small income and winning belated recognition. He was invited to give Conversations by divinity students at Harvard and became increasingly popular in the Midwest, from whence he was able to return from tours of three or four months with more than a thousand dollars. In 1859, he had been elected superintendent of Concord schools, a position that allowed him at last to influence educational reform. Long before such things became the norm, Alcott urged the introduction of singing lessons, physical-education classes, conversations rather than rote recitations, and an end to the barbarity of the cane. His annual reports to the School Committee contain profound and still pertinent observations on education. In 1879, he founded the Concord School of Philosophy, a summer course of lectures by Alcott and others which fulfilled the desire of Victorian-era Americans for self-improvement even in leisure pursuits. The school was popular with day-tripping Bostonians and with Midwesterners who, having encountered Alcott on his many speaking tours, filled the lodging houses of Concord while the school was in session. The New England press, which had been so scathing, took to calling Alcott "Emerson's master."

He had outlasted his more illustrious neighbors. Thoreau had died during the Civil War, leaving Alcott partly in charge of his papers. Margaret Fuller had drowned in a shipwreck. Emerson had faded into dementia. In October of 1882, Alcott, after his summer school had closed for the season, suffered a stroke that severely disabled him. He spent his remaining years reading over his sixty-one volumes of journals, in which he could no longer write. Fortunately, perhaps, for his peace of mind, the one episode of his life that he could not revisit was the Fruitlands debacle; the journals from 1841 to 1845 had been lost. Bronson Alcott died on March 4, 1888. Louisa, who had shared his birthday, died just two days later. ♦

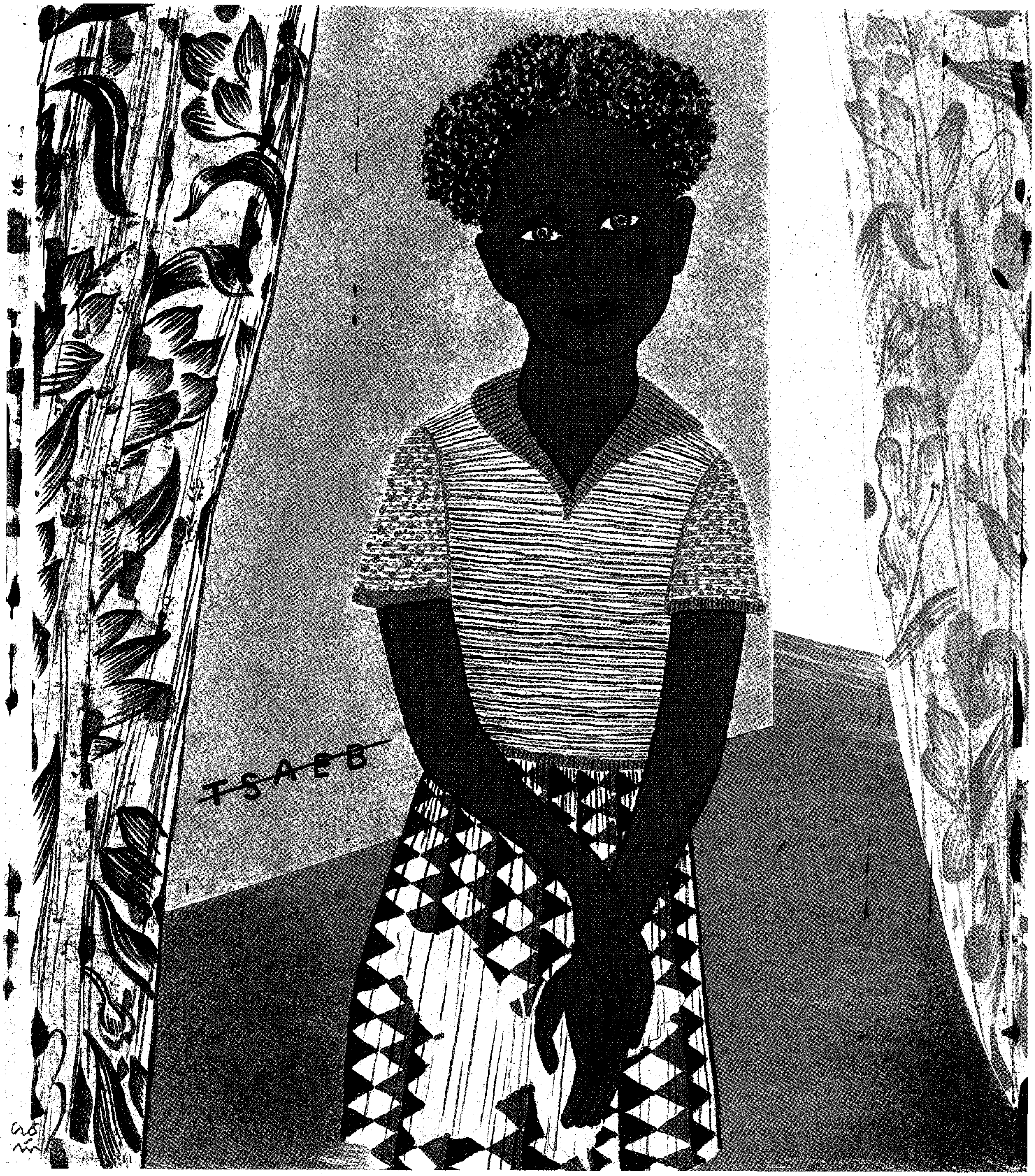


"Do you mind if I give you a little destructive criticism?"

FICTION

READING LESSONS

BY EDWIDGE DANTICAT



The first time Danielle remembers ever being aware of her breasts was when she was thirteen and her mother told her to rub crushed butterflies on them to make them grow. Not already dead butterflies but live ones, plucked from flower petals by her own hands. Saturns were preferable because it was easy to tell the pale females, which she needed, from the darker males, which she did not. Swallowtails and other species with black spots were considered unlucky. And she was not, no matter what, to mistake a thick-antennaed moth for a butterfly, for if she rubbed a poisonous moth on her dot of a nipple not only would she get a rash but she wouldn't see another centimetre of growth for the rest of her life.

She was already an expert lizard hunter—she preferred the kink-tailed ones to any other kind—so the butterflies proved to be easy prey, but because she was used to more struggle than they were capable of she'd sometimes press too hard. Either their wings would crumble, leaving a fine, sticky dust under her fingernails, or the butterflies would simply fall apart and she'd pile the corpses in a jar, a kaleidoscopic, see-through mausoleum, too horrifying to keep in her mother's cosmetics cabinet yet too beautiful to discard.

The day her mother was shot by a young man no older than Danielle—a classmate of hers, according to some witnesses—as she was coming home from her textile shop, Danielle simply uncovered her jar of butterflies and threw its contents to the two iguanas she kept in a small cage in her parents' bamboo-hedged, hibiscus-lined garden. And, because she'd taken her mother's advice, her breasts did grow, so much so that, years after she had left adolescence and left Haiti with her father and was working as a first-grade teacher at a small experimental school in Miami's Little Haiti, she discovered in the shower one morning a chestnut-size lump in one of them, the right one, which seemed to have bloomed overnight, as if her mammary glands had been soaked in a butterfly bath while she slept.

She had told the story of her mother and the butterfly potion to the two Haitian women who showed up in her classroom that very evening to learn to read. Surrounded by hand-drawn maps of their Little Haiti neighborhood, real maps of what Danielle and the kids called Big Haiti, a globe that showed the whole world, and drawings made with parents and refrigerator doors in mind, both women sat stiffly in the adult desks towering over the children's bureaus, which, for the evening, had been pushed to the outer corners.

BRIAN CRONIN

Danielle had been drafted to teach one of the school's so-called twilight literacy classes after the principal, her clandestine boyfriend of two and a half years, came up with the idea of helping the students by giving the parents a taste of the American educational system. The school had a ninety-nine-per-cent Haitian student body—the one "foreign" boy had, like the school's principal, been born of Haitian parents in Burundi—so she expected the same of her evening class. She was dreading her first moments before the Creole-speaking mothers and fathers, who, unlike their children, wouldn't simply look up at her with helpless glee but would rate her on things that she suddenly found difficult to conceal, like her rapid loss of enthusiasm for her job, or her growing discomfort at keeping a secret that could be either harmless or devastating.

Before the two women had shown up, she'd been thinking of just going through the motions, replicating with them some of what she attempted from morning to afternoon with their kids—the alphabet singsongs, the vowel and consonant drills, the color charts, the math demonstrations with Popsicle sticks. She might even repeat for them some of the questions the children constantly asked: What is a refugee? Why do my parents need money? What is a *bouzen*? What is a vagabond? Every once in a while, she planned to tell the parents, she was delighted when a child made a more puerile inquiry: How does a kite fly? How does an airplane stay up in the air? Where are my tears hiding when I'm not crying?

When forty-three parents enrolled for the classes, two of whom Principal Boyfriend, as Danielle liked to call him, quickly discovered couldn't read in any language at all, he bypassed his small group of eager recent Ed-school graduates and deposited the two, for more intimate instruction, in her care. Besides, he pointed out, each had a child in her class. The younger parent, Fania, a willowy woman in a sleeveless crimson dress, was mother to Vanya, a scrawny girl whose hair was always braided in what seemed to be a hundred yarnlike plaits, each individually fastened with a different-colored barrette. Vanya's barrettes reminded Danielle of the flecked aphids that had invaded her mother's garden during the summer months of her childhood, sucking the moisture out of her banana trees until they were drier than paper.

Lorvane, a strapping, stoic-looking, blue-uniformed hotel maid, had three children at the school. One of them was indeed Danielle's pupil—Paul, a restless, rambunctious boy, who at the beginning of the year had lost two front milk teeth that still showed no signs of being replaced by adult ones.

"What's in this for me?" Danielle had asked Principal Boyfriend when he'd playfully dangled a time sheet in front of her that afternoon.

"Aside from the extra money?" He still had the same French accent, he'd told Danielle, with which he'd spoken since he left Burundi at sixteen. "Of course, the endless satisfaction of being a miracle worker, of making the blind see."

There were times when his projects annoyed her so much that she thought she might hit him, not hard and not often, just once. But there were also times when she found herself feeling grateful to him, for even as he orchestrated his grand pedagogical schemes he never overlooked the details of her own life. He'd signed her up to teach that class, for example, as if he knew exactly what she would need that evening: not to be alone in their vast yet sparsely furnished Brickell Avenue condo, staring into a mirror, prodding anxious fingers at her flesh.

Her two evening students had only nodded to each other once when they'd arrived; both looked equally exhausted after long days at what Danielle assumed were physically taxing jobs. Even before the class had officially started, they could barely keep their eyes open.

"Why do you want to learn to read?" Danielle asked them.

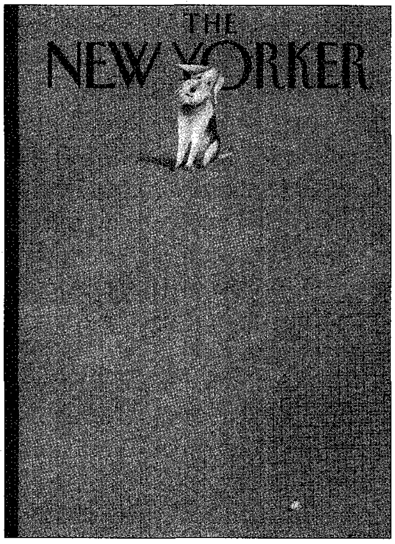
Lorvane shrugged, then replied, "Because I don't want people to take me for an imbecile."

"For my daughter," Fania said, her close-set eyes growing misty and full.

"I have another reason you might want to keep in your mind," Danielle said, leaning back into the same red rocking chair from which she read daily to her first graders. "Do the two of

ADVERTISEMENT

"PUPPY LOVE"
by Mark Ulriksen



Published 7/30/01
New Limited-Edition Cover Print

The New Yorker is proud to present the newest addition to its Limited-Edition Cover Collection. Only five hundred prints, signed by the artist and numbered, will be available in this special series.

FRAMED WITH MAT: $395
Gallery-quality wood frame.
Specify matte-black or
whitewashed natural wood.
ARCHIVAL MAT ONLY: $280
Plus shipping & handling.
Tax charged where applicable.

ORDER ONLINE AT
WWW.CARTOONBANK.COM

(Special offers and discounts
available when you shop online.)

OR PHONE
1-800-897-8666

CARTOONBANK.COM
A New Yorker Magazine Company

1-800-897-8666

you ever travel between Haiti and here?"

"Now and then," Fania answered.

Lorvane nodded coyly, as if uncertain where Danielle was taking them.

"You remember what it's like when it's time to fill out your customs and immigration forms? You probably ask the person who happens to be sitting next to you on the plane to do it for you, right?"

Fania kept her eyes on the cover of her brand-new composition notebook while Lorvane bobbed her head, her droopy chin sinking into her chest.

"Some of the seatmates are not always in the mood, or able to help you," Danielle continued, "so they wave you off, forcing you to ask the steward or stewardess, who has other duties but must quickly do this small favor for you as the whole plane watches. Reading and writing can spare you this type of humiliation."

She had prepared the speech beforehand and wanted to give them both a concrete goal to aspire to, the dream of one day completing questionnaires for themselves and for others. But to round things off, Danielle—whose furniture-maker father had snickered at his illiterate plane-mates during the flight that had brought them to Miami—also told Fania and Lorvane about ancient civilizations whose indigenous populations never knew how to read or write but, instead, used hieroglyphs with which it was easy to recognize water as a series of wavy lines, and a man or a bird as a drawing of such. And she reminded them both of the well-known Haitian saying "*Analfabèt pa bèt*," one of Principal Boyfriend's recent favorites, which, though it did not rhyme in English, could be translated as "Illiterates are not stupid." Then, before proceeding to help the women trace and retrace the first letter of what suddenly seemed like a very long alphabet, she told Fania and Lorvane, whose mouth opened into a giant O as she occasionally nodded off, about breasts and butterflies and mothers lost too young. She volunteered to answer their questions, which, it turned out, were not so different from the ones often asked by her younger students: How long will this take? When will I go home?

That night, after class, the two women made a trip to Principal Boyfriend's office to tell him that they had learned only how to write the letter "A" in their first session with Danielle. She never opened a book and wrote only that single letter on the board toward the end of class. The rest of the time, she had just talked and talked like some crazy woman, and not always in English, which they hoped to learn, but in Creole, which they already spoke a whole lot better than she did. They asked to be transferred to someone else.

"Screw them," she told Principal Boyfriend when he recounted all this to her in bed. He held one of her hands under the sheets. She dangled the other over the side of the bed and, after a sudden rush of blood to her fingertips, felt it go numb.

She wished sometimes that she'd agreed to his suggestion to paste a glow-in-the-dark constellation to the ceiling. He'd told her soon after they moved in together that when he was a boy he was afraid of really dark nights, nights that in Cankuzo were called "Who are you?" nights because it was hard even to recognize a friend. She hadn't wanted their bedroom to look like a child's bunker, but now she thought she might reconsider, for if she had planets and galaxies, half-moons and shooting stars to stare up at on nights like this it might be easier to pretend that she was somewhere else, in her mother's garden, perhaps, on a warm summer evening, with soft blades of grass stroking her cheeks.

Before going to bed, she had checked again and her lump was still there. It had neither grown nor shrunk since the morning, when she'd come across it like a strange presence in a familiar place, a sudden sixth finger near a perfect set of five, an amorphous birthmark on a swan-like neck. She was beginning to think of it, this thing inside her, as a fragile egg that might crack. It was essential that he not touch it, especially with amorous intent, as loving touches might nourish it or release it from its shell to roam freely to other parts of her body.

"Maybe I should send those two women to someone else," he said. He released her fingers to run his hand across her flat, muscle-rippled abdomen. When his elbow accidentally touched the lacy padded bra she had kept on, she moved it away and carefully lowered his arm onto his gut, a small mass of a beer belly filled with foods and sweets and liquors that she had also enjoyed.

"I love you, you know," he whispered. His words surprised her. She couldn't remember the last time he'd said that to her.

Maybe six months before, in the little garden café near the school, where he'd boldly taken her to lunch to celebrate their two-year anniversary as a "secret" couple before asking her to move in with him. Apart from her father, he was the only man she felt she could follow anywhere, yet she could never bring herself to tell him this. She had already shown her loyalty by joining the staff of his school, by agreeing to carry on a live-in romance that all her colleagues suspected but could not prove.

She didn't reply to his declaration of love, just reached over and took his hand and put it back on her stomach.

"We have an investigation going at school," he said. He moved his face closer to hers and stared at her in the dark. She wanted to turn away, but instead she pressed her eyelids together to make another kind of sky, a sky full of fireflies, tiny little torches lighting dead mothers' paths.

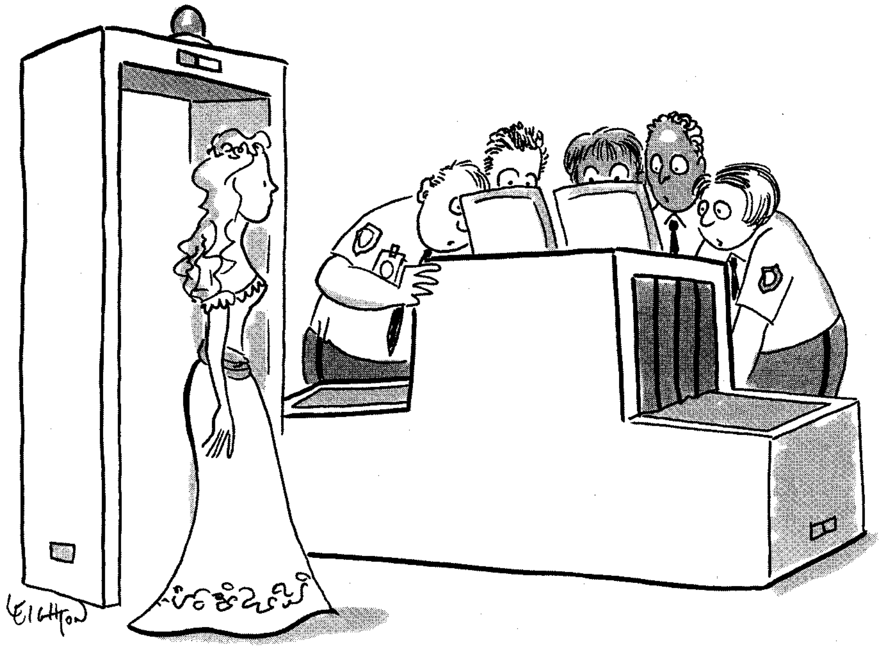
"Is it something big?" She wished she could paste fireflies to their bedroom ceiling, ones that she could let loose around the room now and then. But even when she was a girl, and immersed in the insect world, she had never trapped fireflies. Unlike the butterflies she kept until they turned to glittery dust, once the fireflies were dead she was no longer interested in them.

"One of our kids told an aide that he was slapped by a teacher," he said. "I asked Chantal Cazeau to look into it."

Chantal Cazeau: that grim-faced twenty-four-year-old doctoral student who was volunteering at the school for the year. On the wall above her desk in the office that she shared with three other aides was a giant poster filled with despondent-looking kids across whose faces were printed the words "CHILDREN NEED ADVOCATES," followed by a dozen exclamation marks. Like all the other teachers, Danielle had sat through many of Chantal Cazeau's lunchtime professional-development seminars.

"The children are sacred" was the theme of every one of her talks. "They deal with all kinds of shit at home: poverty, drugs, indifference, absent parents working two or three jobs to make the rent. We don't want to add to their trauma here."

In addition to her role as school counsellor, Chantal Cazeau had suddenly become the school's attorney general, cracking down on lesson-plan violators, inattentive testers, and abusive teachers. Principal Boyfriend had a lot to do with this. With the children's salvation as his ultimate end, he could turn the least bit of enthusiasm into zeal, and had quickly made Chantal Cazeau a fanatic. Even though he shared little of his private life with his staff, he never hesitated to tell



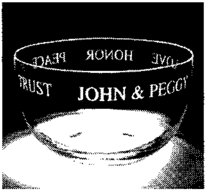
PANDORA'S CARRY-ON

To Picador
Happy 10th Birthday
From Jeffrey Eugenides

To my Publisher
on
turning
Ten,
I hope you will
publish me
again
JE

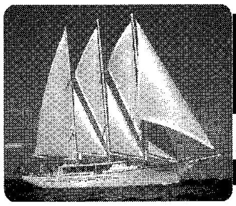
Author of *Middlesex*
A Picador Paperback

More Sizes. More Widths. More Style.
Free Shipping
Free Return Shipping
365-Day Return Policy
110% Price Protection
SKU #105989
SKU #7143547
Zappos.com
www.zappos.com
the web's most popular shoe store!



CELEBRATION BOWL
Weddings - Anniversaries
Send someone you love a personalized crystal masterpiece.
Special Inscriptions? Yes.
Rush delivery available.
8.5" - $139 12" - $249
831-427-3512
www.celebrationbowl.com

Canoe Canada's Arctic
Fly-in canoe trips on the remote tundra rivers of North America's last great wilderness. Herds of caribou & muskoxen, white wolves, moose and grizzlies. Warm, arid summers. Wildlife biologist guide. Operating since 1974.
Brochure: CANOE ARCTIC INC. Box 130AK
Fort Smith, NT, X0E 0P0, Canada (867) 872-2308
www.canoearctic.com



The most popular sailing cruises in the Virgin Islands, Chesapeake, and New England.
THE Arabella
www.cruisearabella.com
800-395-1343
Also available for corporate & private charter

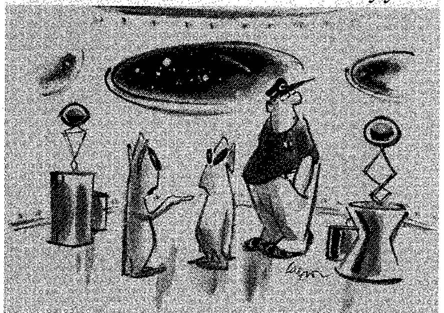
Looking for a big-enough God?
The Episcopal Book/Resource Center
www.episcopalbookstore.org
815 Second Ave. NYC
800-334-7626 x6118

Advertisement

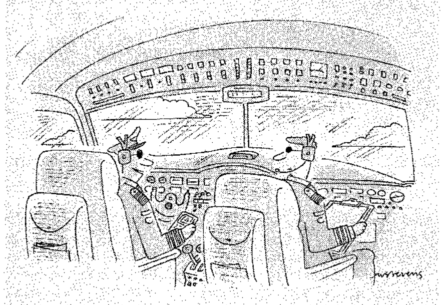
For the serious collector with a sense of humor...

An opportunity to own original cartoon art from THE NEW YORKER.

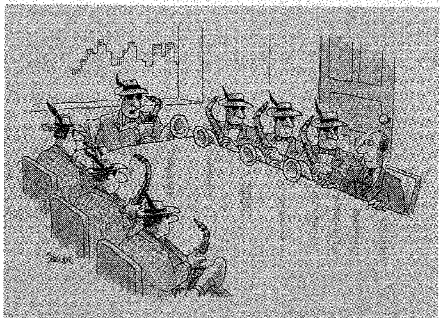
"I've done the numbers, and I will marry you."



"You abducted him—you feed him."



"This is so cool! I'm flying this thing completely on my Palm pilot!"



"Damn it, Hopkins, didn't you get yesterday's memo?"

Contact THE CARTOON BANK at 1-800-897-TOON

them that he loved them. He'd probably told Chantal Cazeau in some way that he loved her, just as he had the cafeteria workers, the janitors, the security guards, his secretary, even the soccer coach. And in return they all worshipped him enough, he hoped, to serve the children even better.

It wasn't meant to be a slap, just the wave of a hand, like a conductor guiding members of an orchestra, each with the same goal in mind but different instruments in hand. Toothless Paul, as even the other children with missing teeth called him, was one of the most disruptive boys in her class. He had long legs, which he constantly knocked together, and a loud, jittery laugh. Of her faithful twelve, her disciples, he interrupted her the most, both with his clamorous mirth and his impertinent questions. Whenever she tried to silence him by giving him some extra task or forcing him to stand alone in the back of the room, she was reminded that, unlike the other children, who had some weaknesses in either English or Creole, Paul was equally fluent in both and knew a long list of mumble-ready cuss words in each.

He was in the habit of reaching over and, with both hands, grabbing the top of the chair in front of him, and rocking the little girl in it back and forth. Her name was Ruth, and she always wore elaborately ruffled Sunday dresses to class. Danielle had once called her parents to advise them to dress her more casually, but Ruth's father had informed her that they didn't take school casually and did not want to attire their daughter in a way that might encourage her to do so. Also, he said, they were Pentecostals and their religion prohibited them from letting their child wear most of the other clothes that were in stores these days.

Danielle could now see that Paul's rowdiness might have something to do with his mother's inability to either engage or restrain him, for he always seemed eager, hungry even, for distractions beyond anything around him. Perhaps she should have called the mother in, or referred him to Chantal Cazeau for evaluation, but she had thought herself capable of handling him.

That particular morning, she was reading a version of Hans Christian Andersen's "The Snow Queen" to the class. Concerned that the children might not fully understand the story, she had avoided it before. But Principal Boyfriend had encouraged her to make it a part of her reading lesson, to show her students, he said, that people from other cultures also valued tales filled with ugly demons and little girls who spoke to flowers, rivers, and birds.

She had found herself enthralled with the sound of her own wistful voice. *The most beautiful landscapes looked like boiled spinach, and the nicest people appeared loathsome, or they seemed to stand on their heads with their stomachs missing and their faces so twisted that you couldn't tell who they were. If someone had a freckle, you can be sure that it would spread over his nose and mouth.* For a while, she had even managed to ignore Paul, who mimicked her facial expressions and lip movements and grimaced to distract the others. *How grey and hard the wide world was!* But the more Paul was ignored the more animated his impersonation became, until most of the children stopped listening to laugh at him. Or were they laughing at her?

The room was completely silent when Danielle put the book down and headed for Paul's desk. As Danielle approached, he straightened his body and looked straight ahead, avoiding her glare.

Even as she was standing beside him, she had not yet decided what to do with him. Where would she send him this time? To the back of the room? Or, as a new measure, to the principal's office?

She had meant only to accentuate whatever command she gave him by pounding on his desk with her open palm, but when a familiar toothless smirk flashed across his face, one he desperately tried to control, she found herself wanting to erase it, the way she did the words and numbers from the blackboard at the end of each school day.

She realized that she'd hit him only when she heard the other children gasp. Paul reached up and rubbed the side of his face, but only for a moment. There were no finger marks that she could see, no blood streaming past his lips. He didn't cry. Instead, he went on smirking, his toothless gap growing wider, until Danielle walked back to her red rocking chair and continued her reading lesson.

The next morning, Principal Boyfriend left before she did, for he had duties, as he constantly reminded her, which required that he arrive at school ahead of the staff, even the cafeteria workers. On this day, this new day, she would neglect the lump, not check for it at all. She would pretend that in her sleep some magic clock had been turned back to the days when her body was still her own.

She was certain now that he knew about Paul. He was simply waiting for her to confess.

"We owe each other that much," she could imagine him saying. Or perhaps, "You owe young Paul that much."

"And what does anyone owe me?" she might say, but probably wouldn't.

She couldn't face them yet. Not him. Not Paul. Not Chantal Cazeau. So she called his machine at work and said that her father wasn't feeling well and she was going to see him.

Her father still lived in the same town house in the gated lakeside community where she'd spent her late-teen and college years. Aside from her education, it was the only lavish expense he'd allowed himself, after selling their house, his furniture business, and her mother's textile shop in Haiti. Between her college and graduate-school years, he had remarried twice, first to a retired nurse, who went to Port-au-Prince on a medical mission and decided to stay, then to a young beauty-salon owner who had wanted him to cut off all contact with Danielle.

Whenever she came to visit her now single father, she loved lying on his gingham, feather-stuffed couch with her head on his lap, as they caught up on each other's life. He no longer smelled the way he did when she was a girl, like the lemon-and-alcohol-scented furniture varnish, which had given an orange tint to his callused palms. Now he smelled like wet soil, crabgrass and other weeds, tree barks and insect carcasses, like his lakeside garden. He had worked as a carpenter and landscaper for years and was happy, as he often said, to have no other responsibilities but to watch the sun rise and set. He didn't leave the house much, except when Danielle begged him to join her and Principal Boyfriend for the occasional dinner and holiday meals.

After both his wives had left, he began draping the walls with fabric so that his living room looked exactly like the showroom of her mother's textile shop, where crêpe, calico, gabardine, satin, and organza filled every spot. But in her father's house the cloth swayed in the midday breeze.

"You did what?" her father asked, gently running his fingers through her hair.

"I slapped one of the boys in my class yesterday," she said.

"Any blood?"

"No blood."

"Then?"

"Then maybe I should quit."

"Why?" he asked, without even lifting his fingers out of her hair. "Don't you remember how hard your mother used to beat you because you liked playing with insects so much, because you were like a boy?"

She did remember, as a matter of fact. Not all the time, but every now and then she did. What she remembered most vividly, though, was her mother's odd advice, suggesting that in some way she could transform herself by rubbing the insects against her chest. It seemed harmless now, that advice, even fantastical. But back then she had taken it seriously. Could her body have, too?

"Your mother loved you so much," her father went on. He'd spent that whole first night after the shooting in a chair, shaking, and hadn't said more than three or four words at a time to anyone. "It can't be. It is not possible."

From where her head lay on his lap, Danielle could see what in the midday light seemed like two lines of crystal tears sliding down his face.

"When she was pregnant with you," he said, "she didn't even want to raise her arms too far above her head, because someone had told her that it could cause the umbilical cord to be wrapped around your neck. She didn't hit you because she hated you. She wanted you to be better."

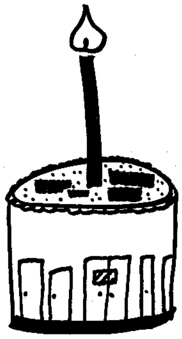
"Better than what?" she asked as she reached up to wipe the tears.

"Better than dirt," he said. "Better than your classmate who killed her. Better, probably, than the boy you slapped yesterday."

Where was that classmate now, about whom all she could remember was that he spent his summers in Canada and could sing along with the radio in three languages?

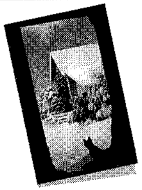
She had become a teacher, her father knew, in order to find these types of boys early, to detect and save them. But

To Picador
Happy 10th Birthday
From Lorrie Moore



Author of *Birds of America*
A Picador Paperback

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY
EVENING EXTENSION PROGRAM
A unique collection of open enrollment courses. View course details and enroll:
extension.columbia.edu
School of Continuing Education
Columbia University
Keep thinking.

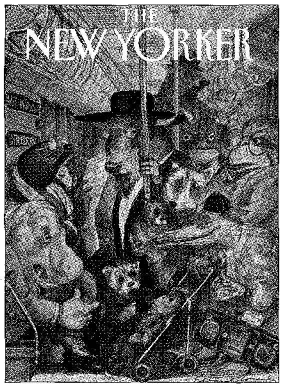


IF YOU TAKE GOOD PHOTOS
www.photosource.com/28
YOU CAN SELL THEM

European Beret $10
100% Wool • One Size Fits All
Black, Navy, Brown, Red, Camel, Grey
Check or Credit Card w/Exp. Date.
Add $2 shipping per order
www.johnhelmer.com
John Helmer • Est. 1921 • (503) 223-4976
969 S.W. Broadway, Dept. N015 • Portland, OR 97205

NATURE-RECOMMENDED™
MENOPAUSE RELIEF SUPPLEMENT
$24.95 Free Shipping
Exclusively at
1-866-5-NATURE
www.nature-recommended.com

Nisbet
PLANTATION BEACH CLUB
Come to Nisbet in Nevis: the most romantic historic resort in the Caribbean. 7th night free with "Winter Thaw" through March.
Call 1-800-742-6008 www.NisbetPlantation.com



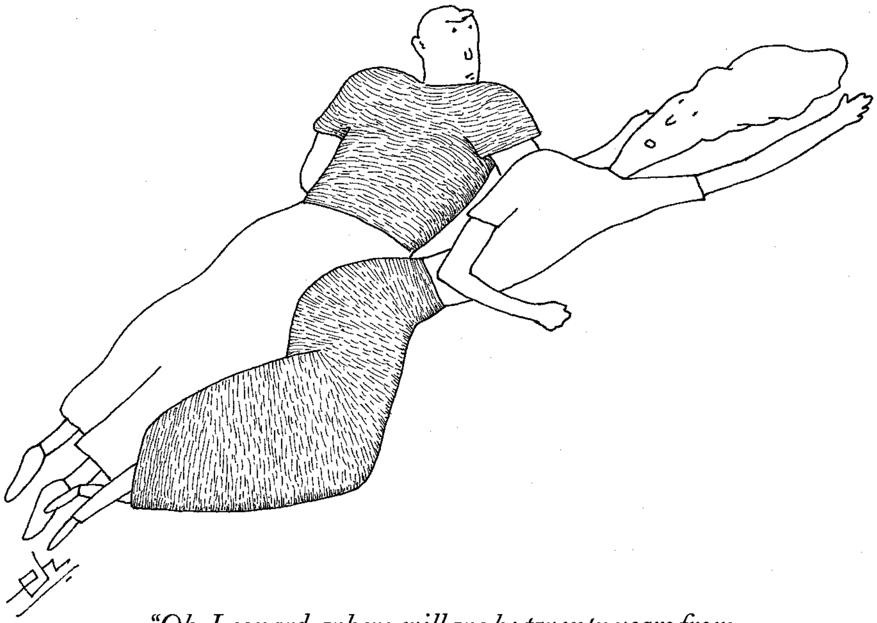
ADVERTISEMENT
"CRUSH HOUR"
by Edward Sorel
Cover date: January 31, 1994
Limited-edition lithographic print.
Numbered and signed by the artist.
Only 500 available.
FRAMED: $395 MAT ONLY: $280
Plus shipping & handling.
Tax charged where applicable.
ORDER ONLINE AT
WWW.CARTOONBANK.COM
(Special offers and discounts available when you shop online.)
OR PHONE
1-800-897-8666

NAPLES, FLORIDA
Artist's Concept
From $1.5 million to over $7 million.
1.866.780.0994
WWW.CAP-D-ANTIBES.COM
Gulf Bay® Marketing Group, Inc. Void where prohibited by law including New York & New Jersey. Equal Housing Opportunity.

Women, Weight & Wellness
Lifelong Solutions for Weight, Image and Eating-related Issues ... Since 1973
GREEN MOUNTAIN at FOX RUN
www.fitwoman.com
Brochure requests: 800.448.8106

Undiscovered Italy
Villa Rentals
from the Alps to the vineyards, from the hill towns to the sea
THE PARKER COMPANY FREE CATALOG
www.theparkercompany.com 800-280-2811

10 Million Pieces!
China, Crystal, Silver, Collectibles
183,000 Patterns • Old/New • Buy/Sell
REPLACEMENTS, LTD.®
1-800-REPLACE (1-800-737-5223)
PO Box 26029, Greensboro, NC 27420 • Dept YO
www.replacements.com®



"Oh, Leonard, where will we be twenty years from now, when our animal lusts are satiated and there's a yawning gulf of familiarity between us, and Father Time surrounds the house and says, 'Come out with your hands up or taste hot lead'?"

• •

the moment she slapped Paul she'd felt neither guilt nor remorse but retribution, justice.

That afternoon, after school, they were all in her classroom, just as his secretary said they would be. Sometimes when she walked into a place like her classroom or their apartment, a place she'd helped decorate, she felt as though she had breached the threshold of her imagination and was inside her own head.

Principal Boyfriend was sitting behind the small mahogany desk they'd picked out together at a flea market. She had wanted something other than the bland, district-assigned desk, something that reflected her own taste.

On her labeled locker, in the same row as the children's, she'd pasted laminated replicas of her diplomas and certificates of advanced-training courses from the University of Miami, where they'd met. He had told her to put them out in full view, to assure the parents that their children were being taught by a well-qualified staff.

When Danielle walked in, she tried to envision how many others had already been there that day. The kids, of course, and the day's substitute teacher. After school, there might also have been counsellors and aides, making suggestions about what measures should be taken.

They had chosen to meet in her classroom, his secretary had said, so that Paul could feel more comfortable telling his story, reënacting the incident even, if he had to. But her own familiarity with everything there confused her. It was as though some of the children had grown up and had become these adults, who were all suddenly irate with her.

Chantal Cazeau sat slouched in the rocking chair, immediately across from Principal Boyfriend. She was flipping through a legal pad filled with notes scribbled in her diminutive handwriting. Paul was at his own desk next to Lorvane, who was wedged into another child's chair. Lorvane, who had probably been called from work, wore her white-collared indigo uniform. The four of them seemed flat and rigid, like the Velcro figures Danielle sometimes used to mime stories for the children.

Principal Boyfriend seemed torn between his roles, his eyes swerving back and forth to look at each of them. Danielle could see that he was choosing his words carefully. Finally, he simply asked her, "Are you O.K.?"

"Let's get started." Chantal Cazeau tapped the legal pad against her palm. "We have quite a bit to cover here."

It was obvious that she was in charge. He had yielded total control to her for these particular proceedings. Good leadership, he liked to say, like good loving, was knowing when to surrender.

Lorvane got up and reached back to massage her behind, where the chair had left a damp crease.

They were all standing now, all except Paul, who remained quietly at his desk, gripping both sides with clenched fists. He tapped his sneakers against the floor without making any noise.

"First of all, I'd like to let Paul know that it was very brave of him to come forward," Chantal said, nodding in the child's direction. "The principal and I are committed to making sure that something like this never happens again."

"Miss?" Lorvane took a few small, hesitant steps toward Danielle. "They say you slapped my son?"

Lorvane kept moving closer, until Danielle could feel her warm breath on her face, could almost describe, if pressed, what Lorvane had eaten for lunch.

"Yesterday I came to learn to read from you." Lorvane pursed her lips, just as her son sometimes did during those rare moments when he was still.

"I wanted to come because my son told me what a good teacher you are," Lorvane continued. "He told me you are patient with him and all the other children. He says you talk to them and explain many things and read all kinds of stories to them every day. I said to myself, 'I have much to learn from this teacher, this wonderful teacher.' "

Lorvane reached toward Paul's desk and, without taking her eyes off Danielle, grabbed him by the shoulders and plopped him between herself and Danielle. His body was obedient and lifeless; his arms hung limply at his sides.

"Am I lying, son?" Lorvane raised the boy's face toward them. Paul shook his head no. His mouth was closed, but his lips trembled and it seemed to Danielle that, for the first time since she'd known him, he might start to cry.

"Let's all sit down and talk about this," Chantal Cazeau said, her voice a few decibels higher than usual.

"You see, Miss," Lorvane went on, ignoring Chantal. "I would give you the permission to spank my son anytime if he needed it, if it would help him."

"That's not the way we do things here," Principal Boyfriend finally interjected. "We would never hit your son at this school," he assured Lorvane. "Do you understand?"

"I would sign a paper, if I have to, for spanking," Lorvane insisted. "But I would never let anyone slap my son."

Lorvane gently moved Paul aside. Freed, he buried his face behind one of the chairs. Stepping back, Lorvane took a deep breath, then aimed for Danielle.

The slap landed on Danielle's cheek before she could see it coming. Her head swung so quickly that both of her ears tapped against each of her shoulders for a moment. Her cheek throbbed. It felt hot, then warm, then deadened, so that if Lorvane slapped her again she probably wouldn't feel a thing.

Now she understood the concept of turning the other cheek. It wasn't so much directed at your neighbor; it was allowing yourself to experience even further pain. Acted out, it would indeed be an extraordinary sacrifice.

"We are finished now," Lorvane said. "No more meetings. No police. Just teach my child. And remember, 'Kids are not stupid.' "

Lorvane grabbed Paul's hand and yanked him across the room toward the door. Her voice remained suspended in the room like one of the children's runaway balloons, the kind they brought to school for birthdays and holidays but never managed to hold on to.

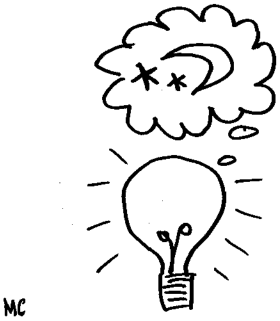
On his way out, with the contented look of the vindicated warrior, Paul turned to face Danielle, opened his mouth, and flashed his bare gums in his version of a celebratory smile.

Danielle heard herself breathing loudly as she tried to massage some sensation back into her cheekbone. The door slammed behind Lorvane and Paul, their loud exchange fading as they moved down the hall.

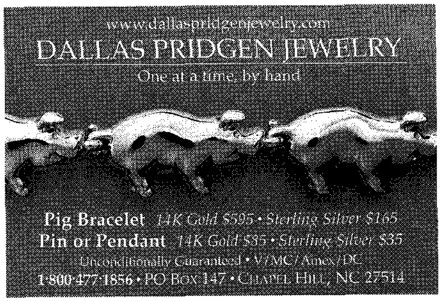
Chantal Cazeau laid her pad on the desk in front of Principal Boyfriend and motioned for Danielle to sit down in the rocking chair. Principal Boyfriend's gaze was fixed on Danielle as though she and he were alone in one of those dark rooms of his childhood, and he was trying to figure out who she was.

A droning sound, like a telephone dial tone, was ringing in Danielle's ear, but she thought she heard Principal Boyfriend ask once more, "Are you O.K.?" ♦

To Picador
Happy 10th Birthday
From Michael Cunningham



Author of *The Hours*
A Picador Paperback


www.dallaspridgenjewelry.com
DALLAS PRIDGEN JEWELRY
One at a time, by hand
Pig Bracelet *14K Gold $595 • Sterling Silver $165*
Pin or Pendant *14K Gold $85 • Sterling Silver $35*
Unconditionally Guaranteed • V/MC/Amex/DC
1·800·477·1856 • PO Box 147 • Chapel Hill, NC 27514

Since 1983
ADRIANCE™
FURNITURE MAKERS
Newport, RI 401-846-4804
Dartmouth, MA 508-993-4800
*Visit www.*adriance.com

NYC's Most Interesting Antiques Shows
ANTIQUES at the ARMORY • January 21-22-23 • 100 Exhibits
ANTIQUES @ THE PIERS • January 22-23 • Over 300 Exhibitors
e-preview™ the shows on the web the night before opening
STELLA SHOW MGMT. CO. 212-255-0020
www.stellashows.com

ENGLAND
IRELAND
SCOTLAND
WALES•
•Rental accommodations.
•Enchantingly rustic to simply elegant.
•Cottages, manor houses, castles.
•London and Dublin flats.
•Weekly or monthly.
As You Like It 415/380-9848 www.asyoulikeitrentals.com

for the discriminating vacationer…
a commitment to excellence
Kiawah Island
Rentals and Sales
Pam Harrington Exclusives
http://www.kiawahexclusives.com
1-800-845-6966

THE CRITICS

RICHARD MERKIN

A CRITIC AT LARGE

JAZZBO

Why we still listen to Gershwin.

BY CLAUDIA ROTH PIERPONT

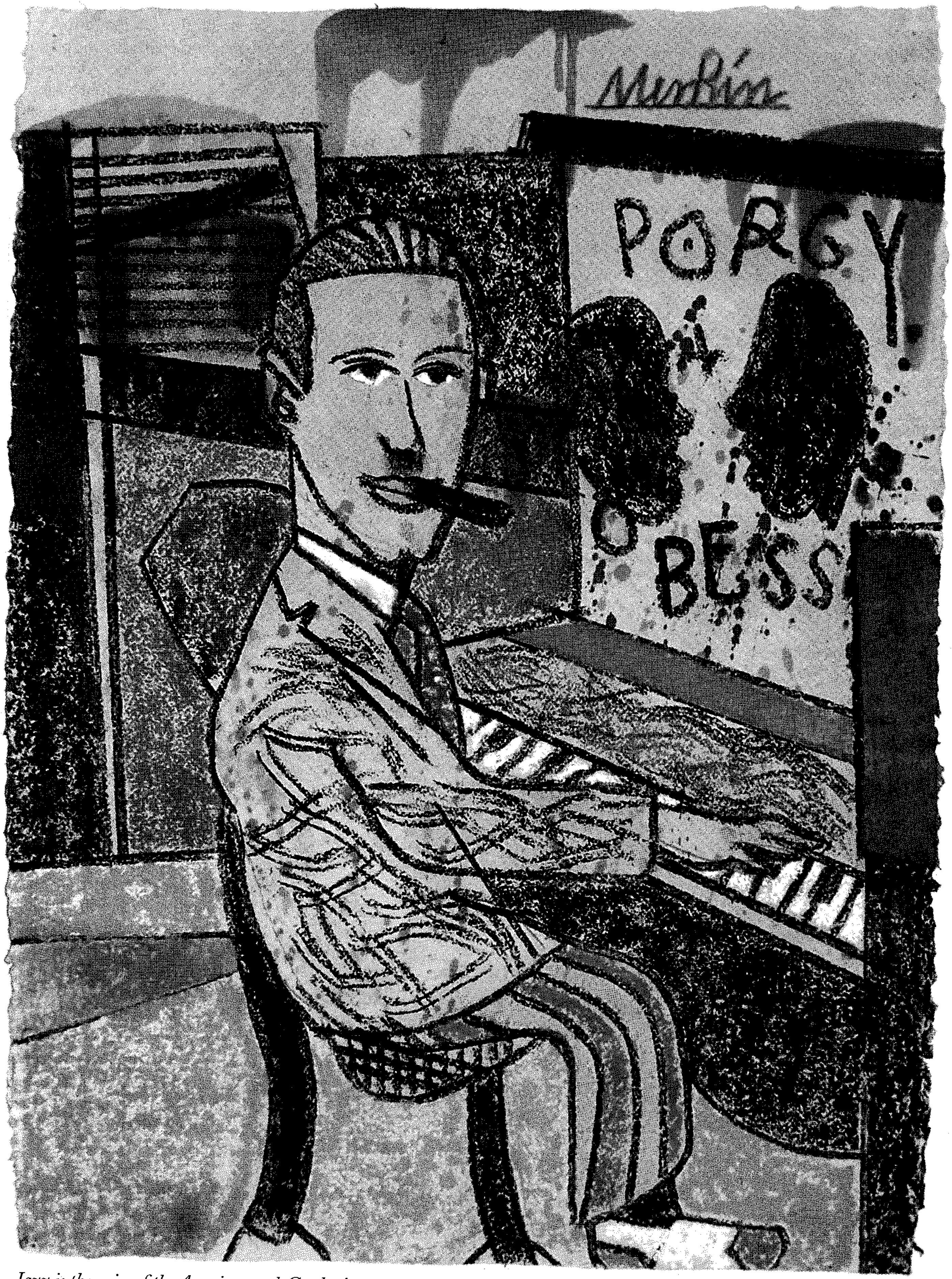
The audience had grown restless, and some people were heading for the exits—the twenty-second piece on the program was about to start—when the clarinet let out an uncorked whoop that riveted everyone in place before its wildly rising cry began to tumble, unmistakably laughing, back down the scale. Nothing like it had been heard before. The tipsy clarinet had hardly been steadied by a burst of brass when a rushing piano part swept the music off to a realm somewhere between Rachmaninoff and ragtime. There was a swoony foxtrot, and a finale that seemed to leave the stage spinning as the audience roared for more. The conductor took several curtain calls that snowy afternoon, February 12, 1924, along with the slender young pianist: Paul Whiteman and George Gershwin, elegant in spats and starched shirts, were bringing jazz to New York's respectable Aeolian Hall. The concert was repeated twice in the next few months (once in the even more rarefied precincts of Carnegie Hall), and the showstopper, Gershwin's "Rhapsody in Blue," was recorded in June—as it has been dozens of times, of course, since then. Still, that performance was unique. Whiteman had put the concert together quickly, to beat out competition—"symphonic jazz" was a movement whose time had come—and Gershwin composed his contribution in about three weeks. There hadn't been time to finish: an arranger in the band had orchestrated the score, but on the scheduled day a page for piano solo was still entirely blank, and the composer, at the keyboard, simply improvised. The written direction for the orchestra's entrance in the big bluesy theme read "Wait for nod."

Gershwin, aged twenty-five and the author of various song hits, from "Swanee" to "Tee-Oodle-Um-Bum-Bo," was suddenly a serious composer and the most famous "jazzbo" in the country—a combination that made him a figure of intensely focussed expectation. Since the end of the war, Americans had been searching for a homegrown music to reflect the jittery new national rhythms, but the alternatives seemed bleak: the operettas of Sigmund Romberg and Rudolf Friml still flourishing on Broadway were old European hat, the shrieks and toots of "modern" composers like Edgard Varèse were unfathomable, and jazz was widely understood to bear some relation to blacks and bordellos which would make the nation's fair-haired children run riot. The announced purpose of the Aeolian Hall concert was to resolve the pressing question "What is American music?" A gold-plated jury had been appointed—including Rachmaninoff himself, Jascha Heifetz, and Fritz Kreisler, all seated in the audience—to support a verdict that Whiteman, the celebrated lily-white "King of Jazz," had carefully programmed in advance. To show how far jazz had come from its scandalous roots to his polished dance band's smooth effects, Whiteman opened with the raucous "Livery Stable Blues"—involving barnyard calls and a tin can—and proceeded through "Yes, We Have No Bananas" to a Victor Herbert suite and, finally, to the rhapsodic pièce de résistance. A defining moment of the Jazz Age, Whiteman's concert made it clear that few people at the time had any idea what "jazz" was.

The word itself was of mysterious origin—according to F. Scott Fitzgerald, "jazz" had once meant "sex"—and the broader questions of where, what, and who fuelled the notorious "jazz debates" of the decade. Blues or ragtime? Black or white? Serious expression or musically illiterate pandering to the masses? The contemporary press was the battleground, and Gershwin himself went into print with a series of articles bearing such eagerly pedagogic titles as "Does Jazz Belong to Art?" and "Jazz Is the Voice of the American Soul," all now happily reprinted in "The George Gershwin Reader," edited by Robert Wyatt and John Andrew Johnson (Oxford; $30). The volume also includes a selection of contemporary reviews, letters, interviews, and up-to-date studies that trace the course of the composer's fairy-tale career, from the Lower East Side to the heights of Gatsbyan glory, where the suave but ever marvelling fellow wrote to his brother Ira, "Flash! Mrs. Dodge Sloan is naming a horse after me. By Sir Galahad out of Melodia."

Given the easy beauty of the Gershwin production and the unpretentious and even naïve charm of the man—friends invariably attested to the music as a mirror of his personality—it comes as something of a shock to encounter the anger and bitterness of a large part of the Gershwin debates, which long outlived the quarrels over jazz while adopting many of the same racial and social implications, and which offer a view of what Gershwin called the American soul, along with the apparently inseparable issue of our musical style. The voice of that soul, according to Gershwin, is "jazz developed out of ragtime, jazz that is the plantation song improved and transferred into finer, bigger harmonies." Writing in 1926 in the magazine *Theatre*, he reassured a nervous public that he was claiming not that the American soul was "Negroid" but that "it is black and white . . . all colors and all souls unified." This was the ideal behind the work he had planned to call "American Rhapsody."

Yet, with the possible exception of

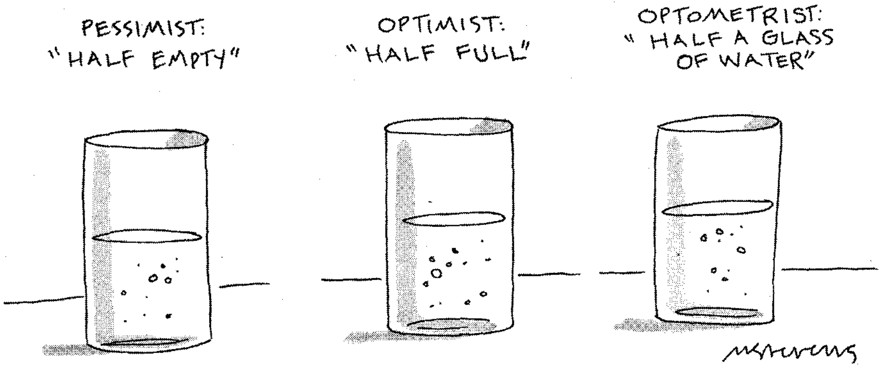

Martin
PORGY
&
BESS

Jazz is the voice of the American soul, Gershwin wrote, and that soul is "black and white . . . all colors and all souls unified."

the original melody of the derided "Livery Stable Blues," no composition by a black composer was played at Aeolian Hall that illustrious day; in accord with the standards of the times, no black musician performed. Nor—as has often been pointed out—has any black composer ever earned the fame or fortune that Gershwin did by "improving" the hard-won art of the plantation songs. In the decades after the "Rhapsody," the questions only intensified in the light of developments in both music and society: How had a popular tunesmith composed our best-known achievements in classical forms? How had a child of Russian-Jewish immigrants come to represent the African-American voice? (Implicit in both: how had he dared?) Aided by some judicious supplementation, the "Gershwin Reader" presents a portrait of the artist who, by writing some of the most fearless and beloved music of the American century, stood like a lightning rod in the storms of an emerging democratic culture.

"Didn't you play anything when you were a boy?" the reporter asked. To which the composer replied, not without pride, "Only hooky." Gershwin credited his unlikely achievement to "the combination of New York, where I was born, and the rising, exhilarating rhythm of it, with centuries of hereditary feeling back of me." His father, Morris Gershovitz, was a dubious patriarch. He had arrived from St. Petersburg in the eighteen-nineties, and—dazzled by the possibilities—had gone into a new business nearly every year: ladies' shoes, Turkish baths, a pool hall, even a bookmaking venture at Brighton Beach Race Track. He had simplified his name and married his Russian sweetheart, Rose Bruskin, whose restless ambition more than matched his own. The four Gershwin children—Ira, born in 1896, who everyone quickly forgot was actually named Israel; George, born (but never called) Jacob, in 1898; Arthur, in 1900; and the only girl, Frances, in 1906—grew up in nearly thirty different apartments, from Harlem to Coney Island, but mostly in the thriving ghetto around Grand Street. This was not a family tied to tradition. Morris's grandfather had been a rabbi, but Ira was the only one of the three sons to be given a bar mitzvah, and this event appears to have been motivated more by Rose's desire to impress her friends with a party at Zeitlan's restaurant, the local kosher Versailles, than by any residual religious feeling. By the time George came of age, it was clear that his only religion was music.

He had been saved by the piano. On a fateful day in 1910, a secondhand upright was hoisted through the family's Second Avenue window and, to general shock, scapegrace street-fighting George, age twelve, sat down and tore through a popular tune like a vaudeville virtuoso. He had never studied a note. Many years later, Gershwin recalled the musical epiphanies of his early childhood: sitting transfixed outside a penny arcade as an automatic piano emitted noises that turned out to be Rubinstein's "Melody in F"; feeling a "flashing revelation of beauty" when the strains of Dvořák's "Humoresque" reached him from the school auditorium while he was, in fact, outside playing hooky. But now a piano had flown in through his window like an angel on a mission—which is as good a way as any of explaining how he could play. "Studying the piano made a good boy out of a bad one," he informed an interviewer in 1924. "I was a changed person after I took it up."



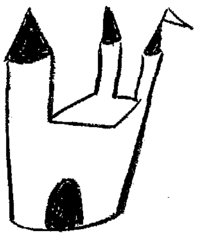
His songs poured out of his playing; he said that the tunes came "dripping off" his fingers, although after the piano arrived he studied seriously—Debussy, Liszt, Chopin—for about four years. The word "genius" occurs for the first time in a letter from a teacher who wrote of trying to keep the boy away from jazz. But Gershwin was never much of a formal student. He quit high school at fifteen to become the youngest "piano pounder" in Tin Pan Alley, and the rest of his education was left to what he called "intensive listening": in the concert halls (he favored Russian composers, like himself), at Broadway revues, in the Yiddish theatres, and, increasingly, in the clubs of Harlem. By 1916, the great black jazz pianists James P. Johnson and Luckey Roberts were telling Eubie Blake about "this very talented ofay piano player" who could perform their most difficult tricks. The point is not that Gershwin was crossing boundaries but that he didn't recognize that there were any boundaries to cross.

He began imagining "big compositions" while he was still in his teens and his first published songs were being interpolated into the higgledy-piggledy formats of current Broadway shows. In 1922, just two years after Al Jolson made a sensation of Gershwin's "Swanee"—performed in his customary blackface—Gershwin composed an ambitious one-act "jazz opera" titled "Blue Monday," which was billed as "a colored tragedy enacted in operatic style." Produced among the skits and high-kicking numbers of the "Scandals" that year, it earned the New York *World's* verdict as "the most dismal, stupid, and incredible blackface sketch that has probably ever been perpetrated" and was yanked after a single performance. Undaunted, Gershwin maintained his optimistic faith in what he called a "transitory stage" of history, when everyone was awaiting a work that would fuse the nation's disparate musical styles and transcend them all: an American work in the image of America. There was a tension about the age, he wrote, that could not last.

"Rhapsody in Blue" gave people everything they had been waiting for. Novelty with depth; virtuosity with passion; originality with a tradition strong behind it—their own too nervous, much too fast, thrillingly sad, and ineffably romantic lives, circa 1924, expressed in sound. Although the initial reviews had plenty of reservations—the piece was structurally incoherent, technically undeveloped—there was no getting around the fact that something new had taken place. In the *Times*, Olin Downes issued a challenge to both the jazz and the classical sides of Gershwin's radically middle path, filling in Whiteman's racial omissions ("The American Negro," he wrote, "has surely contributed fundamentally to this art") and blasting "the pitiful sterility of the average production of the 'serious' American composer," as exposed by the vitality of Gershwin's art. Until black jazz was given recognition, or dry classical branches again bore fruit, the undivided realm of contemporary music had a single heir.

And yet the "Rhapsody," for all its fresh surprise, had an important precedent in the American imagination. One wishes that the "Gershwin Reader" had strayed into wider literary territory, because Gershwin was a phenomenon extending far beyond the musical life. The notion that a person may be so critical to an age that had he not been born he would have been invented seems startlingly true of Gershwin, who called his "Rhapsody" "a musical kaleidoscope of America, of our vast melting pot." He had been invented: Gershwin's inspiration was first espoused by the poor Russian-Jewish musical genius whose American Symphony is the central (if unheard) theme of Israel Zangwill's play "The Melting Pot," which swept the country in 1908 and affixed its title forever to New York, where its drama of assimilation takes place. From *The Nation's* welcoming tribute to Gershwin's "Rhapsody" as "the first distinctive musical phase of the melting-pot" to the *Times'* bright hope that Gershwin would soon produce something "racially important," Gershwin's work imparted a sense of the Jewish affinity with Negro music, both in its wailing sorrow-songs and in its ebullient long-awaited freedoms. The composer was fully conscious of his cultural role—Henry Ford's anti-Semitic Dearborn newspaper had already taken to attacking "Jewish jazz" and its "abandoned sensuousness of sliding notes" (one can virtually hear the opening clarinet glissando of the "Rhapsody")—and he appears to have revelled in it. By 1925, he was working on a series of piano preludes titled "The Melting Pot" and a successor to the "Rhapsody" that he was calling his "New York Concerto."

But, if Gershwin was a product of the age, he was also one of its heroes: the impresario Otto Kahn compared him, as a leader of youth, to Lindbergh. Others were put in mind of Fitzgerald, and there is more than a little of Gatsby in Gershwin's endearingly awkward attempts to master his new social position, as when he announces a "very dignified and sedate" concert, in the magazine *Singing*, and assures readers that none of his numbers "will be cheap or trashy." In appearance, he was immaculately turned out and preternaturally confident and cheerful. But people who came close often remarked on the sadness visible—it is there in many photographs—around his eyes or mouth. His many nervous physical ailments (he suffered miserably from "composer's stomach") were a standing joke among his friends. And his letters contain enough references to loneliness to form a leitmotif, like a blues line moaning low under a jaunty melody.



Never married, uncertainly attached to a series of women (preferably married), Gershwin lived surrounded by people and was renowned for his love of parties but also for spending all night at these parties alone at the piano. ("It will be different in every way," a hostess in Cole Porter's "Jubilee" brags of her next soirée. "Gershwin's promised not to play.") If music had an essential role in easing his loneliness, it was also the means of its preservation: an enclosing wall of sound that dazzled yet held off everyone in the room. Kay Swift, by all accounts the most important woman in Gershwin's life, recalled that "nobody would move" while he was playing, "except toward the piano." You had to listen, you might watch, but you could not break the spell to talk or touch; and neither, of course, could he.

The biographers Edward Jablonski and Joan Peyser—among the foremost authorities on Gershwin's life—have laid blame for the vacancy in the composer's personal history on his mother's chilly disposition, and his sister corroborated stories of a woman with a yen for furs "who did not give herself to anyone." Yet George's siblings all managed to escape into the traditional warmth of marriage. In fact, Ira and his wife, Leonore, provided one of several domestic sanctuaries that Gershwin maintained as informal second homes—even though his own apartment, large enough for three grand pianos, did not contain a single guest room. The melodies that poured out of Gershwin's hands at the keyboard seem to have been an echo of all that he poured in: the close fascination, troubled brooding, sexuality, fantasy, and love that more ordinary people spend upon each other.

But if the "Rhapsody," in particular, contains a portrait, of a man or of an era, it is one that has been continually retouched. The most famous recording, Leonard Bernstein's 1959 full-orchestra version—at the Gershwin centennial, in 1998, it was still the top recommendation of the *Times*—sounds less like twenties "symphonic jazz" than like fifties symphonized Freud: Gershwin's giddy clarinet has become a cat in heat, his lilting central melody a swollen hymn to eros. The larky gaiety of the original is a wholly different experience: one can hear it best in Gershwin's abbreviated 1924 recording. And one can understand its impact best in a passage from the working manuscript of "The Great Gatsby" (also abbreviated, when the book was published, in 1925) about the composer Vladimir Epstien's "Jazz History of the World": a recent sensation at Carnegie Hall, the piece is played one summer night, at Gatsby's special request, for the pleasure of his guests, and Nick Carraway finds its effects indistinguishable from those of champagne. When it is over, he notes, "girls were swooning backward playfully into men's arms, even into groups knowing that someone would arrest their falls." All grace, no gravity, buoyed on music that reflected a world of expectation and yet marked its end.

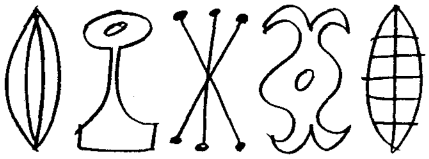
In the fall of 1924, the return of Aaron Copland from his studies in Paris and the arrival of Louis Armstrong from the clubs of Chicago began to tear the ideal of an American synthesis apart. Serious music and jazz went their distinct ways—a composer's art and a performer's art; eternal verity and restless improvisation—leaving Gershwin in a no man's land that came to be known, with a curl of the lip, as "pops." (In an outstanding book about the "Rhapsody," David Schiff indicts "a century characterized by the unpopularity of its most prestigious music.") Gershwin's New York Concerto, soberly retitled Concerto in F, premièred in Carnegie Hall in December, 1925 ("There would not have been as much excitement," the *Times* reported, "if Brahms had come to town"), and was judged a major disappointment. The work was found to lack the substance of a real concerto—or, equally damning, of real jazz. But revolutionary energy defused in one place was already lighting up another: in the first full-evening music-and-lyrics collaboration of the brothers Gershwin, "Lady, Be Good!," which opened on Broadway late in 1924, Fred and Adele Astaire performed a song called "Fascinating Rhythm" and the old-world operetta hastened toward an inevitable, syncopated death.

From then until the 1930 hit "Girl Crazy"—introducing a young ex-secretary named Ethel Merman singing "I Got Rhythm"—the Jazz Age musical coincided with new developments in technology to reinvent people's idea of a good time. Recordings began to outsell sheet music, and proliferating radio stations made possible a new kind of mass popularity—which was, however, extremely short-lived. Despite all the changes, the new librettos remained as trifling as those of operetta and as loosely bound as a revue's. These shows were musical butterflies: light, colorful, and created without thought of survival. Gershwin feared that his songs would not outlast them long.

Instead, of course, the Gershwin scores led to a renaissance of vocal interpretation. Just as Gershwin's music was cast out from the redefined borders of jazz, the greatest jazz performers—never much for borders—were recording every Gershwin song they could; Ethel Waters covered "I Got Rhythm" almost before the opening-night rafters had stopped shaking at Merman's voice. (An essay by Richard Crawford in the "Gershwin Reader" lists seventy-nine recorded versions in the song's first dozen years. Max Roach later estimated the number of tunes written on the changes in "I Got Rhythm" as "about ten million.") But Gershwin's ambition to write larger and more enduring forms persisted, in symphonic works like "An American in Paris" and in experimental shows like "Strike Up the Band" and "Of Thee I Sing"—political satires with songs so cleverly embedded in the stories ("Wintergreen for President") that, ironically, most expired with their shows, just as Gershwin had feared. And then, in 1929, Gershwin signed a contract with the Metropolitan Opera to write a full-length work, based on the Russian playwright S. Ansky's 1914 drama "The Dybbuk," about diabolical possession in a village of poor Hasidic Jews.

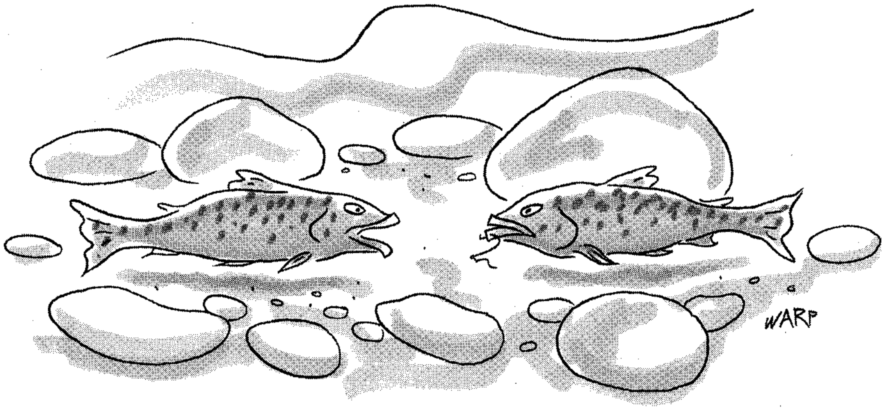
It was not the first subject that had awakened his interest. In 1926, Gershwin had been excited by Dubose Heyward's popular novel "Porgy," the story of a crippled Negro beggar, set in Heyward's native Charleston, but discussions bogged down because Heyward's wife, Dorothy, was turning the book into a play. Later that year, the Habima Players of Moscow brought Ansky's mystical drama to Broadway, accompanied by a score based on authentic Hasidic melodies. Inspired, Gershwin sketched in some scenes and was planning to go abroad to study Jewish folk and liturgical music; his plans were abandoned only when an Italian composer obtained exclusive rights to Ansky's play and the Met pulled out. But the idea of an opera remained: at the height of his fame, Gershwin was toiling away at lessons in harmony and counterpoint. In March, 1932, he wrote again to Heyward and, with the theatrical run of "Porgy" complete, the pair settled on the project that Gershwin called his "labor of love."

From Catfish Row to the Pale of Settlement and back again: worlds that had in common not a shred of language, tradition, or belief but—far more important, for Gershwin—were saturated in and sanctified by music. Heyward's book, like Ansky's play, flows on a stream of song and chant, the open-voiced thanks and lament of a devout people who have long been isolated from modern ways. There is a whiff of musical Eden in Gershwin's description of the South Carolina Gullah Negroes, among whom "Porgy" is set, as a people who express themselves "quite naturally by song and dance": if the comment seems today to carry a racial sting, it is important to remember that this was precisely how Gershwin saw himself. As for Heyward, he had grown up poor, was orphaned young, and, like Gershwin, had dropped out of high school; stricken with polio at sixteen, he had nearly lost the use of his arms. Personal history had drawn him to the story of a crippled beggar aflame with pride, a real individual whom he had read about in the local papers—not as a condescending outsider but as one who recognized his own. Years later, recalling the weeks that Gershwin spent in the South, going to church services and listening to spirituals, Heyward wrote that the visit had felt more like "a homecoming."



Gershwin began composing with "Summertime," in December, 1933. He was determined to write his own spirituals; only the cries of the Charleston street venders—some of the eeriest vocalizing in the opera—were drawn directly from reality. Ira, always close at hand, provided the urbane lyrics for the drug-dealing villain, Sportin' Life ("It Ain't Necessarily So"), while Heyward sent the libretto (honed from Dorothy Heyward's play) and the more pastoral lyrics from his home. The letters between Gershwin and Heyward form a wonderful record of their collaboration, in warm sympathy on the fundamental points: the necessity of an all-black cast (a decade after "Blue Monday," Gershwin recoils when Jolson tries to interfere with a blackface version) and as much emotional truth as possible. ("I have cut out the conventional Negro vaudeville stuff," Heyward assures the composer about a scene from the play.) But Gershwin is adamant (against Heyward's advice) on using operatic recitative for the speech of the Negroes and spoken dialogue—flat, gruff, a break in the flood of music—for the intruding whites. The distinction is like that between Shakespearean characters who speak poetry and those limited to prose.

The cast consisted largely of conservatory-trained singers who would have had operatic careers if the country's theatres had not been closed to them. "Porgy and Bess" was produced not at the Metropolitan Opera—Marian Anderson was the first African-American soloist to sing there, in 1955—but by the adventurous Theatre Guild. Todd Duncan, the baritone who played Porgy, tells of auditioning for Gershwin with an eighteenth-century Italian aria because he refused to conform to the idea that blacks ought to sing spirituals, and he had nothing but disdain for popular songs. When Gershwin immediately offered him the leading role, Duncan coolly replied that he'd have to hear the music first. In a luminous account of this reverse audition, Duncan describes his conversion from skepticism to tears as Gershwin played and caterwauled at the piano ("My voice is what is known as small," Gershwin liked to say, "but disagreeable") and summed up his wonder at the results with the inevitable question: "Where did this man get this from?"



"Nice lip piercing."

After eleven months of composition and nine months of orchestration—this from a man who could turn out a song in an hour or two—"Porgy and Bess" went into rehearsal in August, 1935. Of all his accomplishments, Gershwin was proudest of the thickly contrapuntal orchestral writing. ("Get this, Gershwin writing fugues!" he crowed. "What will the boys say now?") Although a hit in Boston, the three-hour show was severely cut before it reached New York, where many of "the boys" had been sharpening their knives since 1924. Cultural hopes occasioned by the "Rhapsody" had long since been deflated. On opening night, in October, the Alvin Theatre was packed with show-biz celebrities, but few classical musicians were in sight. (Aaron Copland, listing the country's most notable composers the following year, found room for Piston, Strang, Salzedo, and Citkowitz but refused to scrape as low as Gershwin.) The *Times* sent representatives of both drama and music; the drama critic objected to the use of operatic recitative (a device he seemed never to have heard before), while the music critic complained of the number of Broadway-style songs.

There were some ecstatic accounts. Marcia Davenport, in the magazine *Stage,* called "Porgy and Bess" the first true opera since Strauss, and wrote with something like the old melting-pot ardor of the scene of mourners at a wake, "its rhythms Negroid, its soaring, minor cadences yearningly Hebraic." Performing in the climax of that scene, the soprano Ruby Elzy was widely praised for the savagely beautiful aria "My Man's Gone Now," which concludes with a rising cry that Davenport characterized as "a wail, a minor arpeggio for which the composer's direction is *glissando*": a tragic pendant to the tipsy clarinet of "Rhapsody in Blue."

Of the reviews that were out for blood, the composer was reportedly most wounded by Virgil Thomson's assertion that "Gershwin has not and never did have the power of sustained musical development." Thomson's review—it is not included in this "Reader" but can be found among his collected essays—is a dizzying mixture of perspicacity and poison. Asserting that Gershwin was a charming but not, of course, a "serious" composer and had adhered far too uncritically to his "melting-pot sources," Thomson conceded that "Porgy and Bess" was fully alive despite being afflicted by "fake folklore" and—as the phrase appeared in the journal *Modern Music*—"plum-pudding orchestration." (In Thomson's collection, the phrase is "gefiltefish orchestration." One suspects that the editor of *Modern Music* found this choice of delicacy distasteful.)

Thomson's charge that "Porgy and Bess" was racially offensive—"Folklore subjects recounted by an outsider are only valid as long as the folk in question is unable to speak for itself, which is certainly not true of the American Negro in 1935"—had some uneasy support from black musicians. Duke Ellington was quoted as objecting to Gershwin's dramatic characterizations, and to the opera's lack of a Negro musical idiom, but he claimed to have been misunderstood. Despite Heyward and Gershwin's lofty aims, the characters in "Porgy and Bess" are, after all, poor and superstitious; they speak in an uneducated dialect; the hero is a cripple and the heroine an addict. Porgy's upbeat anthem "I Got Plenty o' Nuttin' " might be intended as a noble Rousseauian cry of freedom, but it could also be taken as a bitter historical truth.

"Porgy and Bess" closed in just over three months, losing its entire investment. The sudden demise of his most beloved work prompted Gershwin to leave for Hollywood in the summer of 1936—he had had a big success there five years earlier—although Hollywood was not particularly eager to have him. The boy genius had fallen down hard. "Porgy" bore the dangerous mark of highbrow miscalculation, and—unlike Berlin, Porter, or Rodgers—he hadn't had a Broadway hit in a long time. ("I had to live for this," Gershwin grumbled, "that Sam Goldwyn should say to me, 'Why don't you write hits like Irving Berlin?' ") Given Gershwin's record of maladies, increasingly violent headaches were dismissed as just another of his nervous symptoms; his unprecedented swerves into foul humor were chalked up to the experience of failure. Doctors, finding nothing wrong, suggested psychiatric help, while members of his circle suspected him of being self-indulgent, even when his motor coördination began to falter. He was living then with Ira and Leonore in a large house in Beverly Hills. Long afterward, Ira recalled a night when George spilled food at dinner and Leonore ordered him to leave the table; Ira was still trying to exorcise his memory of the look in George's eyes when he helped him get upstairs. He was spending most of his time lying down by then, the headaches were so bad; but he was moved to a smaller house nearby. There was no more piano playing, the house was dark—sunlight hurt his eyes—and he complained that all his friends were leaving. On Friday evening, July 9, 1937, George Gershwin went into a coma, and there was no one with him but a nurse and the valet whose job had once been to keep people away.

In the hospital the following day, a brain tumor was detected. One of the country's leading neurosurgeons, vacationing on a yacht in Chesapeake Bay, was brought to shore by a military craft sent out by President Roosevelt's personal physician; but it had been too late for a long time. Emergency surgery was performed early Sunday, and that morning Gershwin died, at the age of thirty-eight. The body was sent back to New York, and, despite terrible rain on the afternoon of the funeral, at Temple Emanu-El, there was, *Variety* reported, "a turnaway attendance." That fall, a memorial concert was broadcast from the Hollywood Bowl, where Fred Astaire sang "They Can't Take That Away from Me," and Ruby Elzy performed a lacerating "My Man's Gone Now." In published accounts of Gershwin's estate, which was estimated at more than four hundred thousand dollars, his most profitable musical property was listed as "Rhapsody in Blue," assessed at $20,125. His least valuable work, "Porgy and Bess," was worth two hundred and fifty dollars.

Barely five years later, in 1942, a New York revival of "Porgy and Bess" scored a commercial triumph, largely because Gershwin's operatic recitatives were replaced with spoken dialogue. It earned the kind of reviews that Gershwin had craved: even Virgil Thomson discovered that the work's "inspiration is authentic and its expressive quotient high." But, if Gershwin was cheated of his vindication, he was also spared the fury of the next wave of reaction.

In 1953, another major revival of "Porgy and Bess"—starring the young Leontyne Price, fresh out of Juilliard—prompted James Hicks, the reviewer for the Baltimore *Afro-American*, to declare Gershwin's labor of love "the most insulting, the most libelous, the most degrading act that could possibly be perpetrated against the Negro people." In the following decade, Harold Cruse's widely read manifesto "The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual" sought retribution for the injustices done to Negro artists. "The Gershwin-type musicians achieved status and recognition in the 1920s for music that they literally stole outright from Harlem nightclubs," Cruse wrote. "Porgy and Bess" was nothing more than "a symbol of that deeply-ingrained American cultural paternalism practiced on Negroes ever since the first Southern white man blacked his face." In a sad and dreadful coming full circle, Cruse called for a boycott of the opera by all black musicians and insisted that it ought to be performed only by whites in blackface.

Fortunately, few musicians agreed. Whatever Duke Ellington felt in the thirties, in 1953 he cabled Robert Breen, the director of the new production, "Your Porgy and Bess the superbest, singing the gonest, acting the craziest, Gershwin the greatest." For generations, black musicians have kept this score in a state of grace. Sidney Bechet's incandescent recording of "Summertime" is as close as one may come in this world to hearing Gabriel welcome you home; Billie Holiday sang the song as though the world contained no home at all. (Holiday once claimed that she had turned down the part Ruby Elzy played in "Porgy," because she couldn't bear to sing "My Man's Gone Now" night after night: "It's too sad. It's the saddest song ever sung.") In 1959, a bloated movie by Otto Preminger made Gershwin's entire premise seem a stale mistake, but the bad air was blown away by Louis Armstrong and Ella Fitzgerald's two-voiced brass-and-silk "Porgy" album, and by Miles Davis's equally blithe reconfiguration of the score. Looking in the New Grove "Gospel, Blues and Jazz" these days, one will find Gershwin mentioned only as an adjunct to Davis's "Porgy" recording. But close the book and listen—to Herbie Hancock's Grammy-winning "Gershwin's World," to Marcus Roberts's distinctly personal "Rhapsody" on "Portraits in Blue" (with a band that mixes jazz musicians and the Orchestra of St. Luke's), or, for that matter, to the Minnesota Klezmer Band's recent "Gershwin the Klezmer"—and he is everywhere.

In our daily lives—in our elevators or our memories—we know the tunes even when we don't know exactly what it is we know. When the New York City Ballet orchestra launches into its Gershwin ballet, "Who Cares?," the audience inevitably starts to sway and bits of piping lyric escape into the air, uncontainable, from people who don't realize they have begun to sing. Gershwin was planning to compose a ballet when he died—but what wasn't he planning to do? In the last months of his life, he told his sister that he had not yet "scratched the surface" of his aspirations. He was thinking of a big work about Abraham Lincoln, he was asking Heyward for new ideas, and there was always his original idea of "an opera of the melting pot, of New York City itself," which would "allow for many kinds of music, black and white, Eastern and Western, and would call for a style that should achieve, out of this diversity, an artistic and an aesthetic unity." We'll never know what we lost when the sounds and the colors divided behind him. A brilliant 1986 Glyndebourne Festival Opera production of "Porgy and Bess," directed by Trevor Nunn and conducted by Simon Rattle, successfully reëstablished the work's recitatives, its dignity, and its composer's goals. Gershwin was lauded as an operatic genius and, by one critic deeply impressed with the composer's empathy for his characters, as "an archetypical White Negro." Small wonder that a history of Gershwin criticism often reads simply like history (that thing which people fail to learn from). More than seventy-five years ago, Gershwin had a better term for what he was. "My people are Americans," he wrote, and, lest we forget, "my time is today." ♦

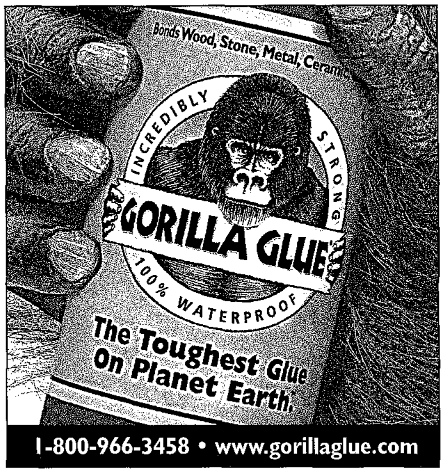
BRIEFLY NOTED

Brass, *by Helen Walsh (Canongate; $14).* This début novel reaches out to its target audience quickly. Millie, a student in Liverpool and one of two first-person narrators, introduces herself by having sex in a graveyard with a female prostitute, snorting cocaine ("beak"), and rhapsodizing about the sky. Her co-narrator, Jamie, speaks in opaque Liverpool slang (in a musical substitution, "lad" becomes "la") and tries to keep up with his friend's string of self-debasing escapades. Millie's journey is a classic bildungsroman, a reckoning of her parents' sudden separation and a thoughtful, if expensive, interrogation of sex and friendship. All this might amount to no more than a voguish blend of Irvine Welsh and Michel Houellebecq, but Walsh's prose is rhythmic and carefully judged, and her descriptions are convincingly tactile. Every time an uncomfortable situation occurs, she holds steady and makes each miserable moment sink in.

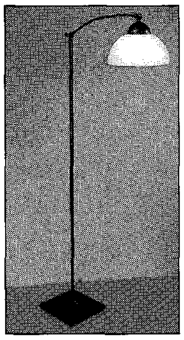
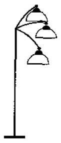
Door in the Mountain: New and Collected Poems 1965-2003, *by Jean Valentine (Wesleyan; $29.95).* Unlike the confessional poets who influenced her earliest verses, Jean Valentine has come to adopt a more skeletal approach to personal experience, preferring terse lyric fragments to continuous narrative. Her recent poems seem simultaneously well crafted and incomplete, like mosaics with missing tiles. While occasionally obscure, they often deliver wry inversions of conventional wisdom: "Do well in the world. / If you do well / we'll throw you away." References to alcoholism, dysfunctional parents, and estranged lovers reveal a more standard autobiographical impetus, but, through nearly four decades of work, the dream life is equally pervasive. The result is a world where even sex is "not the thing itself, / But a metaphor," and where a vision of Fellini in purgatory or an elegy to a child who died of AIDS calls to mind a dream's alarming lack of boundary between the dead and the living.

The World of Music According to Starker, *by Janos Starker (Indiana; $29.95).* Starker, one of the most technically pristine cellists of the past half century, has had a dramatic life. In wartime Budapest, his Jewish family struggled to avoid displacement and imprisonment; two brothers were almost certainly shot, and Starker himself worked in a labor camp. After the war, he formed part of an extraordinary diaspora of musicians leaving Hungary—he recalls that many of them participated in a 1946 competition in Geneva because it got one a visa—and, arriving in America, slotted his early solo career around stints as an orchestral musician. (In the pit at the Met, he would work forty-eight-hour weeks, and the conductor moved his seat to stop him ogling the women onstage.) Starker includes stories about such apparently unpromising subjects as the cellos and bows he has used through his career and improvements he designed for the instrument's bridge, which demonstrate the cellist's obsessive love of his craft.

An End to Suffering: The Buddha in the World, *by Pankaj Mishra (Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $25).* For more than a decade, Mishra tells us, he has pondered a book about the Buddha—whether a historical novel about Siddhartha Gautama, the man who brought about "a revolution of ideas in North India" more than two and a half millennia ago, or a study of his teachings and their influence on Western writers. But, as these projects foundered, Mishra came to accept that his own journey of self-discovery was beginning. The final product mixes an account of the Buddha with the story of Mishra's path from Mashobra, a Himalayan village near the Buddha's birthplace, to the far reaches of India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and beyond. Mishra offers glimpses of the "restless, grasping selves" he has shed—alienated student in Allahabad, ambitious but unfulfilled writer in London—as he struggles to reconcile lessons of the Buddha's life with his own shifting world.



Bonds Wood, Stone, Metal, Ceramic
INCREDIBLY STRONG
GORILLA GLUE
100% WATERPROOF
The Toughest Glue On Planet Earth.
1-800-966-3458 • www.gorillaglue.com

PERFECT READING LAMP
LEDGER Floor Lamp
The Double Swivel Action places light correctly for a high or low chair, desk or a computer.
Bronze with Slate Base
Opal White Shade
Height (Adj): 30"-54"
100 w bulb
Dimmer Switch
$129.00
2 for $229.00
shipping $12.00 each
Mail or Phone Orders
NEW HAVEN LIGHTING 1-800-243-3123
P.O BOX 6353 Hamden, CT 06517
www.newhavenlighting.com

at the intersection of law and life
THE BOLD NEW MAGAZINE
In the January | February Issue:
Incest among the Amish • I ♥ Big Pharma
Computers' rights • Unreliable lineups
Taking Earth Day global
legalaffairs
On Newsstands Now
www.legalaffairs.org • 800-406-5615
• SPECIAL OFFER •
Save 44% at www.legalaffairs.org/nyer

STRUCTURE HOUSE™
a renowned facility and community for weight loss, diabetes management, and lifestyle change
www.structurehouse.com • 1.800.553.0052

Cruise Newsletter
Cruise Reviews & News
12 Issues • $39/year • Free Trial!
CRUISE SPECIALS, NEW SHIP PREVIEWS, PORT PROFILES & MORE
CruiseCritic.com • 877.730.9155

Advertisement

JOIN THE NEW YORKER
MARKETING DEPARTMENT'S
EXCLUSIVE ONLINE
FORUM TODAY.

THE NEW YORKER
COMPASS

www.newyorkercompass.com

DANCING

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

The Trocks.

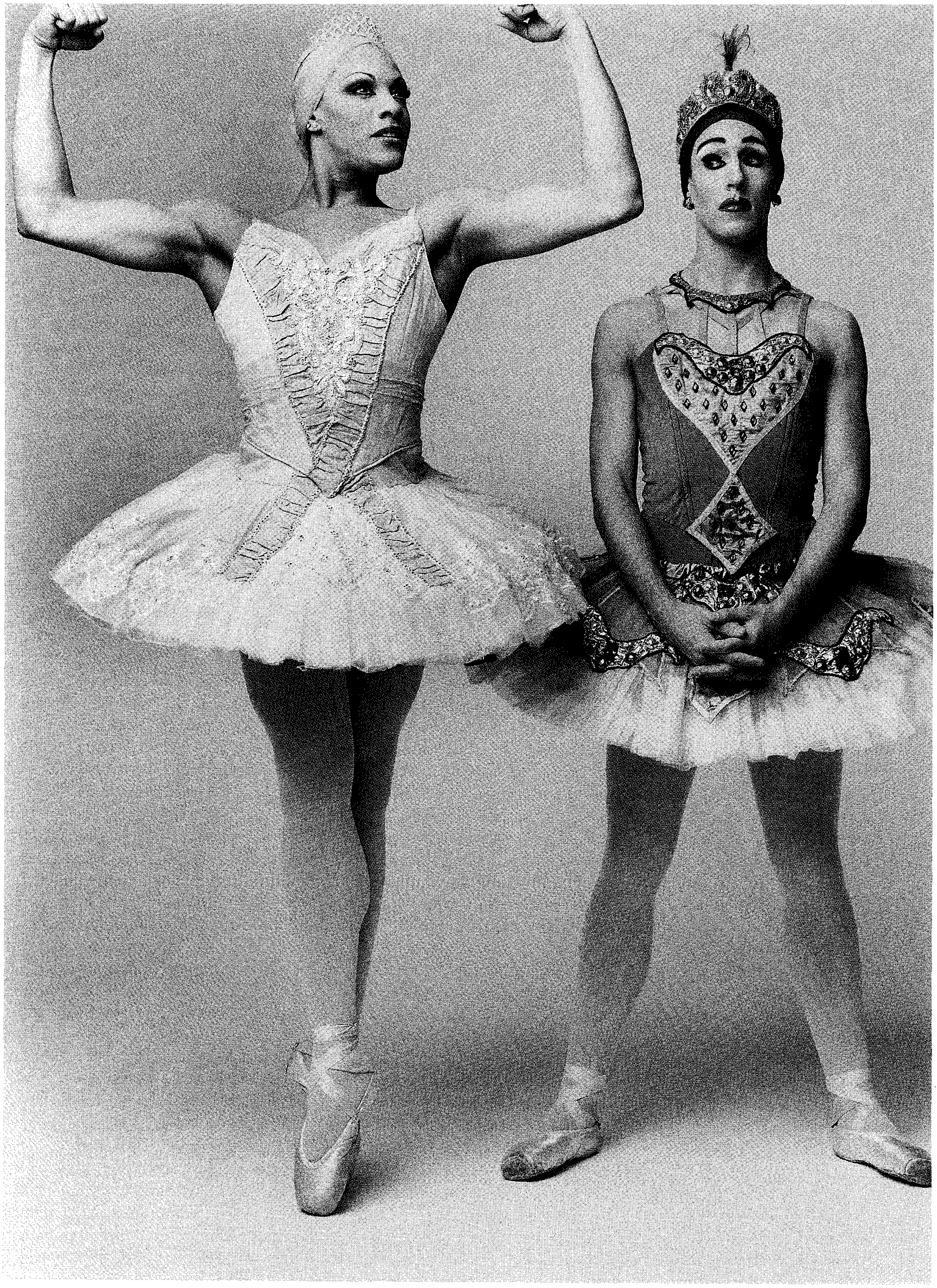
BY JOAN ACOCELLA

The Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo, a travesty troupe, with men darting about on point as sylphs and odalisques, made its début in 1974 in a loft on Fourteenth Street managed by the West Side Discussion Group, a homophile organization. The stage was a twelve-by-twelve piece of plywood; the audience sat on folding chairs. "The place was on the second floor, and the stairs were steep," says Eugene McDougle, an archeologist who lost his heart to that show and has been the general director of the company ever since. "The Fire Department could have closed us down." So could the ballet authorities. With a cast of ten, the show had only two men who could actually do classical dancing. That first season lasted two weekends. Today, the Trocks, as they are known, work forty weeks a year. They are a sensation, and a staple. Has success spoiled them? I don't know—I wasn't there in 1974—but when, last month at the Joyce, I watched the opening night of their thirtieth-anniversary season, I thought, These people are delivering more bang for the buck than most other classical companies in America.

The Trocks' business is comedy, and the basic joke, of course, is that men are dancing women's roles. Just to see those size-10 point shoes, those yawning armpits, that chest hair peeping up over the bodices—I do not mention what greets you when the ballerina turns and her skirts fly up—is to laugh. Then, there are what you could call the vaudeville gags, excellent ones. (The cavalier and his lady, their dance completed, exit demurely; a moment later, you hear a crash and a scream from the wings.) At a higher level are the jokes specifically about ballet. Have you ever wondered, while watching Michel Fokine's "Les Sylphides," what those dainty, fingery, seeming-to-listen or seeming-to-whisper hand gestures are about? Well, so have the Trocks, and when, in their version of "Sylphides," Margeaux Mundeyn (Yonny Manaure) goes into this business, the corps dancers look at her as if she were mad. Has the so-called Poet, the only man onstage amid the wood sprites, ever seemed to you unusual? Why does he look so abstracted? Has he risen from the dead? Pavel Törd (Bernd Burgmaier), who played the Poet on opening night, had the same questions, and no answer. He padded about, in an ill-fitting blond wig, with his eyes fixed on—what? The auditorium's exit sign? At one point, with great eloquence, he simply stood there and rotated his wrists so that his palms faced us. "Why am I here?" he seemed to say. "Why are all these fairies running around, hurling themselves at me?"

Others of the Trocks' pieces, more scholarly, are studies of a choreographer's style. That was the specialty of Peter Anastos, who was one of the company's founders and original dancers. Before his Trocks period, Anastos had put in many years as a balletomane. Later, he became the artistic director of the Garden State Ballet, then of Cincinnati Ballet, and he created a number of lovely "straight" ballets for those and other companies. He was a serious student of the art, and his 1974 "Go for Barocco," a takeoff on Balanchine's "Concerto Barocco," is as punctilious an analysis as has ever been made of the great choreographer's modernization of the *danse d'école:* his melding of jazz steps with ballet steps, his blending of play with formality, his creation of what was, in the end—though I didn't see it until Anastos showed me—a rather strange all-female fellowship on the stage. Balanchine included one man, basically just to lift the lead woman. Anastos quietly corrected this. "Go for Barocco" is all ladies.

Still other items in the Trocks' repertory are essays not just on ballet but on ballet culture, the customs and legends that have collected around the art. When Anna Pavlova, that most sainted of ballerinas, died, in 1931, her company, at its next performance, shone a spotlight on an



Olga Supphozova (Robert Carter) and Irina Bakpakova a.k.a. Vladimir Legupski (Lionel Droguet). Photograph by Craig McDean.

empty stage while the music for "The Dying Swan," her signature piece, played. Accordingly, the Trocks' "Dying Swan" begins with a spotlight beaming hotly on one wing and then, oops, on another, then another, until at last Ida Nevasayneva (Paul Ghiselin) bourrées out to undergo the celebrated extinction. Once she dies, furthermore, you can't get her off the stage. She milks the applause endlessly; she clearly wants to do an encore. This, again, is a joke on ballet culture. "The Dying Swan" is probably the most encored work in the entire classical repertory. The Bolshoi's Maya Plisetskaya—famous diva, famous hot dog—was known to perform it four times in a row. The Trocks love her for that. "We're kind of selling ourselves as an old, dusty touring Russian ballet company that the modern age doesn't have anymore," Tory Dobrin, the troupe's artistic director, told the *Daily News* recently. In fact, we do see something like that now and then—for example, when the Ballet Nacional de Cuba, which has had a number of important Russian teachers, comes to town. But Dobrin is right. The smell of the greasepaint, the ballerina *in excelsis*, the demented fans: for the most part, that kind of company is now an honored ghost. The last pure example was Sergei Denham's Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo, from whom the Trocks took their name. The Ballet Russe toured America from the nineteen-thirties through the nineteen-fifties, at which point it died a slow, overdue death. It's nice of the Trocks to pay their grandmother this tribute.

The Trocks are still commissioning good satires. Their 2004 "Tarantella," adapted by Pamela Pribisco, the company's ballet mistress, from Balanchine's, is a heavenly commentary on the Italian roguishness of that little dance, and of its star, Edward Villella, who—as the journalists, thrilled to have located what seemed to them a clearly straight man in ballet, never tired of proclaiming—was a street boy from Queens, a college boxing champion. Villella, if I remember correctly, banged the tambourine on his knee; Vladimir Legupski (Lionel Droguet), in the Trocks' version, bangs it on his head. Patricia McBride, in Balanchine's "Tarantella," did a second-position demi-plié on point, a step known among the impolite as the "cunt dip," and smiled at us sweetly, as if nothing special had happened. In the Trocks' version, Sveltlana Lofatkina (Fernando Medina Gallego) performs that step and looks at us as if to ask our room number. How wonderful that this ballet, in its aggressive heterosexuality, was put through the Trocks' irony mill.

But such knowingness is rare in some of the company's recent acquisitions. Last year, the Trocks, faithful to their dusty-Russian-company identification, hired the Kirov-trained teacher Elena Kunikova to set on them the underwater scene from Alexander Gorsky's 1901 "The Humpbacked Horse." With variations for the corals, the goldfish, the starfish, and the jellyfish, presided over by the Queen of the Underwater, this is the sort of grand, and maybe also silly, inventory—with dances for all the kinds of jewels or flowers or dolls or whatever—that was standard in late-nineteenth-century ballet and has now largely vanished. (Its one famous survival is the all-the-candies divertissement in Balanchine's "Nutcracker.") We should be grateful to the Trocks for reviving this scene; according to Dobrin, they are the only professional company, worldwide, that is now performing it. They weren't able to do much with it, however. The set (by John Claassen), with machines in the wings blowing bubbles onto the stage, was adorable. The costumes (by Kenneth Busbin) were even better. The corals wore big orange coquilles, as in the Shell Oil insignia, over their breasts. The jellyfish had glutinous tendrils wafting appallingly from their crania. But the comedy ended there. The dance was performed more or less straight, and it wasn't very interesting. Maybe it never was, and the Trocks, sentimentally, touchingly, imagined that it was.

If so, they should have performed it better. The Trocks are no longer the balletically innocent group that they were in 1974. All the men have had ballet training; most have danced with regular classical companies. "We're not a drag show, honey," Robert Carter, the troupe's foremost ballerina (Olga Supphozova), recently told an interviewer. "If you want to see that kind of crap, you can go to the bar." Carter's pride shows on the stage. His grands jetés in "Sylphides," and also his fabulous, showy gargouillades (the shaking-out-the-legs step) in the "Humpbacked Horse," fairly flame in the air, and he's not the only standout. Lariska Dumbchenko (Raffaele Morra), in her red wig, does perfect, violent hops on point every chance she gets; the evil-faced Fifi Barkova (Manolo Molina), with her chin tucks and hand flicks, is a whole treatise on ballerina gesture. But, if accuracy is the goal, the troupe should go all the way. Carter should get that foot up to the knee in passé; he should finish his pirouettes in fifth position, not in let's-get-this-over-with position. I hate to pick on Carter; he has greater mastery of the female technique than most females I've seen. But, that being the case, he's the one to pick on.

The Trocks are very sophisticated. What they are doing is a carefully thought-out comedy about the history of women in ballet: how ballet ennobled what might seem fatuous in femininity (e.g., those dinky hand gestures); how it also gave women athletic power (e.g., those grands jetés); how, through these means, it posited the female as an emblem of the ideal. When the Trocks are at their best, that is what they show us. As in all great comedy, they pass through the joke and come out the other side, where the subject, having been laughed at, is once again embraced, enthroned.

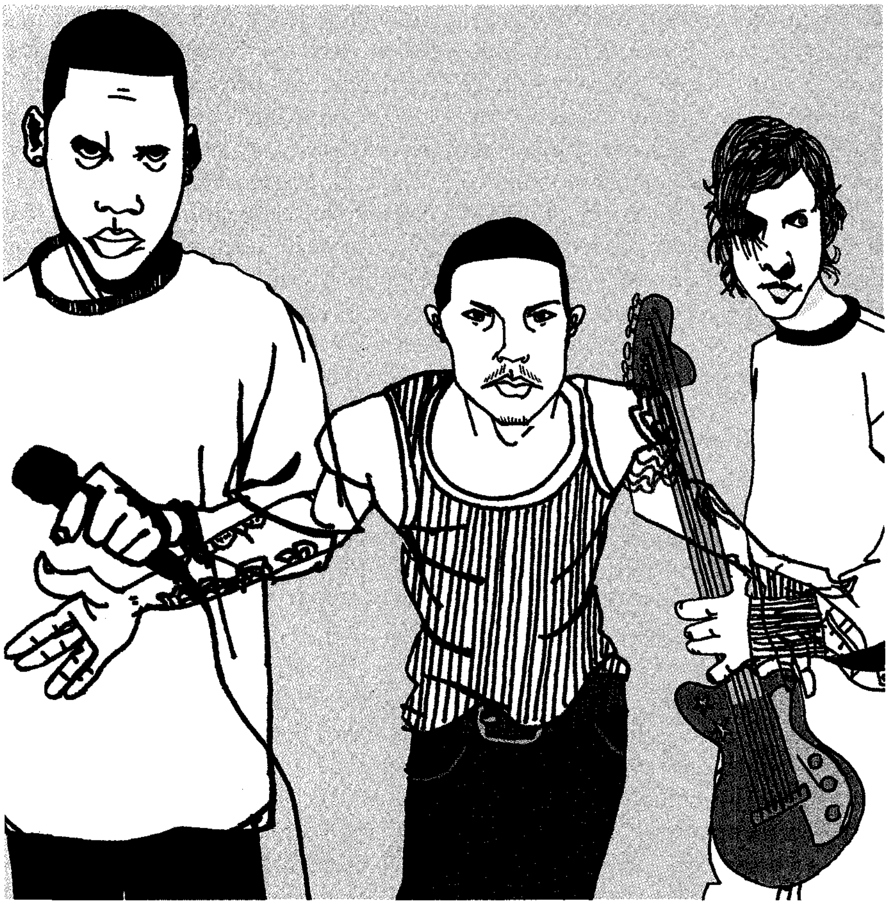
Now is the time to honor female dancing, for in its extreme, tiara-topped version, which is the Trocks' version, it is on its way out. These days, female dancers are now wearing costumes that look like the men's. When the men lift the women, the women may turn around and lift them back. Meanwhile, the men are stealing for themselves the sort of hushed colloquy that, as in "Go for Barocco," was once the women's exclusive domain. Thirty or forty years ago, when two men did a pas de deux—in a Jerome Robbins ballet, for example—it more or less had to be combative, or at least very butch, lest the audience get the wrong idea. Today, after gay rights and the AIDS crisis and the whole reëvaluation of gender that accompanied feminism, the male-male pas de deux may be as rich and textured as the old male-female pas de deux. (Witness the male-male duets performed by George Piper Dances, the English group, at the Joyce a year ago.) In the decades to come, the special, unbreachable dominion of the ballerina, which is the Trocks' great subject, may seem obsolete. For now, then, the company needs to give it everything that belongs to it—not just the saucy smiles and the finger fusses but all the steps. ♦

POP MUSIC

1 + 1 + 1 = 1

The new math of mashups.

BY SASHA FRERE-JONES



Jay-Z and Pharrell Williams meet Beck in a software-assisted collage of vocals.

JASHAR AWAN

In July of 2003, Jeremy Brown, a.k.a. DJ Reset, took apart a song. Using digital software, Brown isolated instrumental elements of "Debra," a song by Beck from his 1999 album "Midnite Vultures." Brown, who is thirty-three and has studied with Max Roach, adjusted the tempo of "Debra" and added live drums and human beat-box noises that he recorded at his small but tidy house in Long Island City. Then he sifted through countless a-cappella vocals archived on several hard drives. Some a-cappellas are on commercially released singles, specifically intended for d.j. use, while others appear on the Internet, having been leaked by people working in the studio where the song was recorded, or sometimes even by the artist.

After auditioning almost a thousand vocals, Brown found that an a-cappella of "Frontin'," a collaboration between the rapper Jay-Z and the producer Pharrell Williams, was approximately in the same key as "Debra." The two songs are not close in style—"Debra" is a tongue-in-cheek take on seventies soul music, while "Frontin'" is hard and shimmering computer music—but the vocalists are doing something similar. Brown exploited this commonality, and used his software to put the two singers exactly in tune.

Both Beck and Williams are singing in an impaired but enthusiastic shower-stall falsetto. Williams's goofy come-on—"Don't wanna sound full of myself or rude, but you ain't looking at no other dudes, because you love me"—is both musically and conceptually in sync with Beck's own daft chorus: "Girl, I wanna get with you, and your sister. I think her name is Debra." Brown's collage sounds not like two songs stitched together but one single theme song for inept Romeos everywhere. After several months of work, he completed the track, called it "Frontin' on Debra," and posted it on his Web site. With an enthusiastic push from Beck, "Frontin' on Debra" was made commercially available in October on iTunes.

"Frontin' on Debra" is an example of a "mashup," in which, generally, the vocal from one song is laid over the music from another. The best-known mashup in the United States is an unauthorized album-length project called "The Grey Album," assembled by Brian Burton, known professionally as Danger Mouse. The vocals are from Jay-Z's "The Black Album," and the musical bed is a highly processed and reorganized version of the Beatles' "White Album." Occasionally compelling, "The Grey Album" is not a great example of a mashup, because the musical bed is processed so radically that its source is sometimes not clear. One of the thrills of the mashup is identifying two well-known artists unwittingly complementing each other's strengths and limitations: bacchanalian rapper Missy Elliott combined with morose English rock band Joy Division, ecstatic Madonna working with furious Sex Pistols. The most celebrated mashups are melodically tuned, positing a harmonic relationship between, say, Madonna's voice and the Sex Pistols' guitars.

Mashups find new uses for current digital technology, a new iteration of the cause-and-effect relationship behind almost every change in pop-music aesthetics: the gear changes, and then the music does. If there is an electric guitar of mashup, it is a software package called Acid Pro, which enables one to put loops of different songs both in time and in tune with each other. Mark Vidler, known professionally as Go Home Productions, explained some other benefits of digital technology to me in London not long ago: "You don't need a distributor, because your distribution is the Internet. You don't need a record label, because it's your bedroom, and you don't need a recording studio, because that's your computer. You do it all yourself."

A legally cleared album of mashups called "Collision Course" is currently in the *Billboard* Top Ten. It is a sort of

"Black Album" footnote, a combination of Jay-Z's work on "The Black Album" and other albums, and the music of Linkin Park, the multiplatinum rock band. "Collision Course" is not a particularly good mashup—Linkin Park's adequate rhyming and bleating vocals only detract from Jay-Z's authority and swing—but it's a good example of why major record labels have taken so long to embrace the form.

As Jennifer Justice, of Carroll, Guido & Groffman, Jay-Z's law firm, explained, "Jay's song '99 Problems' uses two huge samples and has four different credited publishers. That's before you've added anyone else's music to it, which would be yet another publisher or two. Making a mashup with that song means the label issuing the mashup has to convince all the publishers involved to take a reduction in royalty—otherwise, it won't be profitable for the label. The publishers are not going to agree to this if we're not talking about two huge artists. With Jay-Z and Linkin, it's like found money, but less well known artists might not be sexy enough or big enough." This may be true, but lawyers and considerations of profit have little to do with how mashups happen, or why they keep happening.

In April of 2000, an English bass player and MTV v.j. named Eddy Temple-Morris inaugurated a radio show called "The Remix" on London's XFM network. A remix, traditionally, was simply a song taken apart and enhanced by the addition of new elements but not actually combined with another song. Temple-Morris played remixes, many of them rock songs reworked by dance-world producers, and mashups made by friends of his like the producer Garret (Jacknife) Lee. By the end of the year, Temple-Morris was receiving unsolicited CD-Rs from people using aliases like McSleazy and Osymyso.

In October of 2001, a d.j. named Roy Kerr, calling himself the Freelance Hellraiser, sent Temple-Morris a mashup called "A Stroke of Genius," laying Christina Aguilera's vocal from "Genie in a Bottle," a lubricious pop song, over the music from the Strokes' "Hard to Explain," a brittle, honking guitar song. "Stroke" is a perfect pop song, better than either of its sources. What was harmonically sweet in the original songs becomes huge and complex in the combination. Aguilera's vocal is an unabashedly expressive ode to her sexuality, and her control over it. (She will unleash the genie from her bottle only if rubbed the right way.) The Strokes' track is compressed and jittery, as if made by hipster robots, but the chord changes are lovely. The original vocal, by Julian Casablancas, is a good rock snarl, but it is a delivery more of attitude than information. Each song targets a demographic that wants nothing to do with the other—teen-agers texting their friends while cruising the mall, and twenty-somethings drinking cheap beer in expensive New York bars—but Hellraiser brokers an amazing musical détente between the two styles. Stripped of "Genie in a Bottle" 's electronic beats, Aguilera's sex-kitten pose dissipates, and she becomes vulnerable, even desperate. The opening lines now sound less like strip-club small talk and more like a damsel pining from a tower: "I feel like I've been locked up tight for a century of lonely nights, waiting for someone to release me." After another line, she shifts into a wordless "oh, oh" that lays over the Strokes' chord changes so deliciously you can't imagine why the song didn't always do that. After hearing it twice, you can't remember when it didn't.

In fact, "A Stroke of Genius" is so good that it eventually led Freelance Hellraiser to do official remixes for Aguilera and others, and he has just completed, at Paul McCartney's invitation, an entire album of McCartney remixes. "Stroke" also inspired a fourteen-year-old named Daniel Sheldon to start a Web site called boomselection.info. "The Remix" remains England's main hub for mashups, but the rest of the world is being served through Sheldon's site and getyourbootlegon.com, a message board started by Grant McSleazy, who recently graduated to doing legitimate remixes of Britney Spears.

I visited Temple-Morris at the XFM studios in Central London in October. He is a tall, rangy man who gestures quickly and smiles almost constantly. His basic mode is deep enthusiasm and his favorite word is "love," which he uses without irony. "We get our wrists slapped by the record companies and publishing companies and whatever," he said. "But these days there's much more love, there's much less paranoia."

Temple-Morris was broadcasting "The Remix" as we talked. He moved briskly behind the console, speaking continuously to the seven or eight people in the room. In mid-conversation, he smiled, nodded, and leaned toward the microphone. The "on air" light went on without warning, and the track playing in the studio cut off abruptly.

"Love it. Want to take it out to dinner. Wanna marry it. There are some tunes, I don't know what it is, it's the rolling beat, it's that incredible bass line, it's just, there's something really, really sexy about this record. And so I thought, I've got to play you a new really sexy record that I found."

Temple-Morris proceeded to play a record that, under normal circumstances, would have seemed fairly sexy, but, following his salesmanship, sounded like the National Anthem of Sex. This is Temple-Morris's gift: he was born to the job of loving music and persuading others to love it as much as he does.

Also in the room was Mark Vidler, a.k.a. Go Home Productions, one of the more reliable mashup-makers. Once a graphic designer working for a company that made travel pillows, and long before that a guitarist in a rock band called Chicane, Vidler, too, was converted in October of 2001. "I heard 'A Stroke of Genius' on the radio and I thought, That's clever. I could do that," he said. By April of 2002, Vidler was making his own mashups. His first was called "Slim McShady," a combination of Eminem and Wings. "I created it on a Saturday, posted it on the Tuesday, and got played on the radio that Friday, on 'The Remix.' "

Vidler is responsible for several mashups that have the same uncanny brilliance as "Stroke of Genius." "Girl Wants (to Say Goodbye to) Rock and Roll" brings Christina Aguilera back to sing over the Velvet Underground's "Rock and Roll." "Ray of Gob" combines Madonna's "Ray of Light" and the Sex Pistols' "God Save the Queen," and both Madonna and the Pistols admired it.

Mashup artists like Vidler, Kerr, and Brown have found a way of bringing pop music to a formal richness that it only rarely reaches. See mashups as piracy if you insist, but it is more useful, viewing them through the lens of the market, to see them as an expression of consumer dissatisfaction. Armed with free time and the right software, people are rifling through the lesser songs of pop music and, in frustration, choosing to make some of them as good as the great ones. ♦

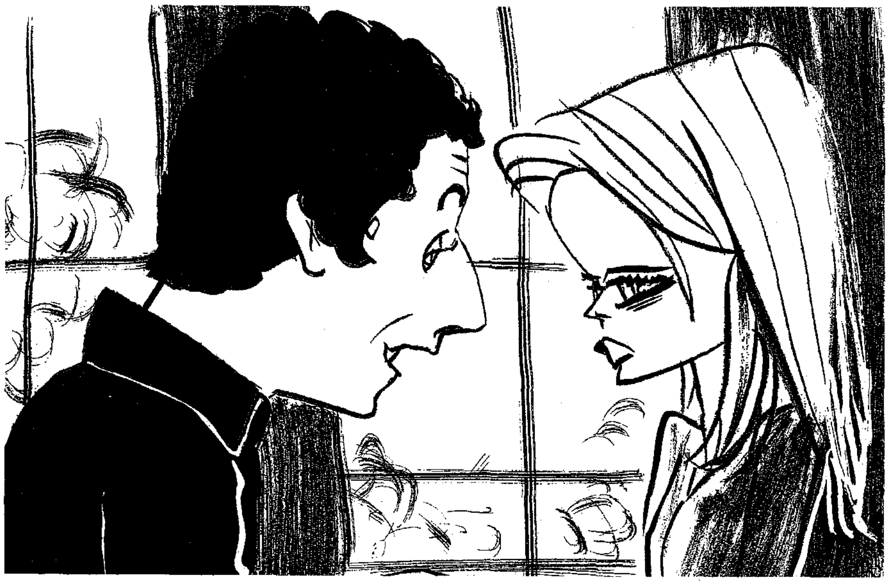
THE CURRENT CINEMA

MASTERS AND SERVANTS

"Spanglish," "The Assassination of Richard Nixon."

BY DAVID DENBY

There are terrible seasonal movies thrown together in a state of laziness and disgust—for instance, that poisoned plum pudding "Ocean's Twelve," in which the director, Steven Soderbergh, and a dirty-dozen pack of stars amuse one another with how little they care about what they're doing. Hanging out in such difficult-to-like locations as Rome and Lake Como (in George Clooney's villa), the stars put each other on and then smile knowingly, as if in possession of some delicious secret. My, what fun. The movie treats us like servants thrilled by the wonderful time our masters are having on vacation. Even servants have pride, however, and memories of "Ocean's Twelve" have been quickly swept into the trash, along with the sticky pine needles and smashed ornaments of the season. But a disaster like "Spanglish" is a different matter. No one could accuse James L. Brooks's latest comedy of carelessness. If anything, "Spanglish" chokes on an excess of sincerity and guilt, and, in retrospect, its failure may turn out to be momentous for a sincere and guilty community—Hollywood liberals in a state of post-election dismay. As I sat watching the movie, my squirming discomfort was only increased by the knowledge that the worst moments in it were produced by the loftiest sense of duty. How could it be otherwise? The creator of "The Mary Tyler Moore Show" and "Rhoda" and such movies as "Broadcast News" and "As Good As It Gets," Brooks has long been an entertainer with a soul, a Hollywood cuddle-dumpling with ambition. Like Paul Mazursky, he abhors myths and superheroes and embraces the human-all-too-human comedy of the everyday middle-class world. But there are potential traps in that kind of good will, and Brooks has fallen into them.



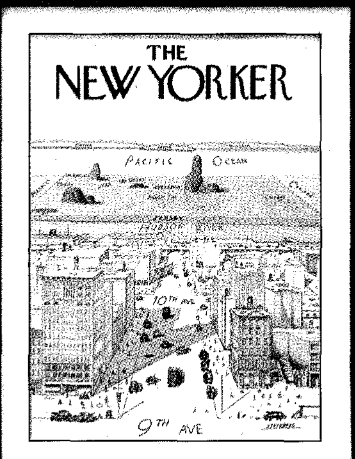
Adam Sandler and Téa Leoni are guilt-filled L.A. liberals in James L. Brooks's film.

TOM BACHTELL

I mention Mazursky because nineteen years ago, in his freewheeling sunlit farce "Down and Out in Beverly Hills," he established the turf that Brooks is mucking up now. In "Beverly Hills," a dissatisfied nouveau-riche white couple, the Whitemans (Richard Dreyfuss and Bette Midler), rescue a ragged bum, Jerry (Nick Nolte), from drowning himself in their swimming pool. Barb Whiteman then takes the mysterious Jerry, who has a sensual grace under his rags, into her

ADVERTISEMENT

THE STEINBERG COLLECTION
AVAILABLE AT
WWW.CARTOONBANK.COM



"VIEW OF THE WORLD FROM 9TH AVENUE,"
MAR. 29, 1976 (ACTUAL SIZE 23" x 29")
Framed Print, $450
Matted Print, $325

The Cartoon Bank presents a landmark offering: *New Yorker* cover and cartoon prints by Saul Steinberg (1914-99), one of America's best-known artists, who captivated generations of *New Yorker* readers with his witty and imaginative covers and drawings.

This collection includes "View of the World from 9th Avenue," the now iconic image that appeared on the March 29, 1976, cover. Three other brilliant Steinberg covers, never before reproduced as limited-edition prints, are also available; all four are numbered and come with a letter of authorization from The Saul Steinberg Foundation and *The New Yorker*.

Order online at **cartoonbank.com** or by phone at **1-800-897-TOON (8666)**.
And ask about our new Cartoon Catalog!

(Special offers and discounts when you order online.)

CARTOONBANK.COM
A New Yorker Magazine Company

© 2003 THE CARTOON BANK. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

bed, and Dave Whiteman tries to turn Jerry into an upstanding citizen while running off himself, in the middle of the night, to visit the bedroom of the family's pouting Mexican maid (Elizabeth Peña). "Beverly Hills" was a good-hearted satire of the privileged delusions and appetites of a certain type of liberal Los Angeles family; Brooks's "Spanglish" feels like an updated, more correct version of the same thing. This time, the Mexican maid steps out of the bedroom and stands on equal terms with her white employers.

In a prelude, Flor (Paz Vega), a lustrously beautiful young woman, crosses the border with her perfect little daughter, Cristina (Shelbie Bruce). After a few years in Los Angeles, she finds work in a West Side household headed by John Clasky (Adam Sandler), allegedly the hottest chef in town, and his wife, Deborah (Téa Leoni), an out-of-work commerical designer who has fallen into a state of hysteria so extreme that her thrashing elbows alone menace every citizen from Brentwood to the ocean. Entering the house, Flor and her Mexican cousin make their way toward the family gathered at a swimming pool in the back, and the cousin whacks her nose against a spotless glass wall—a palpable metaphor of class separation that lets us know that Brooks is in a serious mood. Mortified, Deborah pulls some twenties out of a bowl, showers them on the stunned young woman, and then says, "Was that strange that I just gave you money?" Later, after Flor has worked for the family for a while, Deborah moves everyone to a Malibu beach house for the summer and, on the second day there, takes little Cristina off to have her hair streaked pink without permission from Flor, humiliating her own unglamorous daughter in the bargain. Deborah comes off as a near-monster of selfishness, and A. O. Scott, in his review in the *Times*, accused Brooks of brutalizing her. Brooks, he said, was a smug misogynist.

Well, that's a bit much. When a moviemaker takes a chance and fails, his judgment may be bad, but his soul isn't necessarily rotten. Brooks is actually up to something interesting. Climbing atop her husband, Deborah pulls off the strangest, greediest movie orgasm since Faye Dunaway's TV executive, astride William Holden, blissed out over her high ratings in "Network." But, unlike the Dunaway character, Deborah apologizes. She always apologizes. The point of the satire is that Deborah is well-meaning; that's why her selfishness is funny. Brooks is trying to create a hapless narcissist who gets everything wrong—the kind of person who has been therapized into censoring her impulses but has the same range of competitive drives she always had, and so is always advancing, making mistakes, saying she's sorry, and then screwing up again. Only a dedicated liberal would have conceived of such a character in the first place, and if Brooks had allowed Leoni to relax a little the comedy might have blossomed. Téa Leoni has a puckered mouth, a look of startled alarm, and a long, elegant waist; she's one of the most beautiful and talented comedians working in movies today. But from her first scene Leoni is hyperventilating so violently that she has nowhere to go; she can only repeat herself again and again until she spirals downward into exhaustion and tears. After about half an hour, you don't want to know more about Deborah—you want her to go off to Big Sur, calm down, and shut up.

In contrast to his frantic wife, Adam Sandler's John Clasky is meant to be a sane and gentle man and a good daddy. But Sandler, ducking his head and issuing such indeterminate sounds of dismay as "Awww" and "Arrrgh," seems less a mensch taking responsibility for his family than a sheep looking for a pen. Shaking the wool out of his eyes, this slow-talking, meandering fellow could no more run the best kitchen in Los Angeles than a movie critic could run the New York Jets. Brooks has committed one of the habitual errors of liberal-Hollywood niceguyism: he has tried to make a man good by making him sexless. As Deborah and John, agonized over their privileged state, lick the tiled floors of their beach house in contrition, Brooks stretches every scene to excruciating lengths. We have to go through embarrassing demonstrations that the upper-middle-class white parents are generous but undisciplined and careless, whereas working-class Flor, obsessed with protecting her daughter from corruption—and from assimilating into Anglo culture, too—is entirely moral and dignified, solid through and through.

Since thousands of affluent whites in Los Angeles employ immigrant Latinos as housekeepers, the movie is at least grounded in something real—white guilt, a powerful force in Hollywood. But guilt, when acknowledged, has a way of producing self-consciousness rather than art. In preparation for writing the character of Flor, Brooks spent two years talking to groups of Latina women, and what he's come up with is an exemplary figure, a successor to the sternly virtuous blacks, dignified Native Americans, staunch Asian-Americans, and other stiff-jointed role models produced by Hollywood over

---

THE NEW YORKER IS A REGISTERED TRADEMARK OF ADVANCE MAGAZINE PUBLISHERS INC., PUBLISHED THROUGH ITS DIVISION THE CONDÉ NAST PUBLICATIONS. COPYRIGHT ©2005 THE CONDÉ NAST PUBLICATIONS. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.

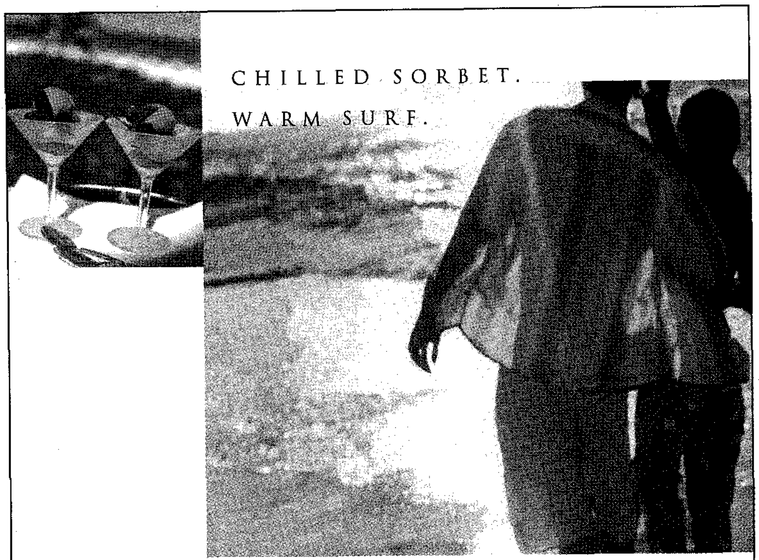
Volume LXXX, No. 42, January 10, 2005. The New Yorker (ISSN 0028-792X) is published weekly (except for six combined issues: January 24 & 31, February 14 & 21, June 13 & 20, July 11 & 18, August 8 & 15, and December 26 & January 2, 2006) by The Condé Nast Publications, which is a division of Advance Magazine Publishers Inc. PRINCIPAL OFFICE: The Condé Nast Building, 4 Times Square, New York, NY 10036. David Carey, vice-president and publisher; William Li, associate publisher; Ronda Carnegie, advertising director; Gail Day, advertising director; Marie Wolpert, advertising director; Jamie Engel, sales development manager; Susan Harrington, director of creative services; Bob Gruters, marketing services director; Ilene Danuff, director of integrated marketing; Douglas Chilcott, associate creative services director/promotion; L. Paul Robertson, associate creative services director/events; Rosemary Stanton, advertising business director; Edward Klaris, general counsel. Advance Magazine Publishers Inc.: S. I. Newhouse, Jr., chairman; Steven T. Florio, vice-chairman; Charles H. Townsend, president and C.O.O.; John W. Bellando, executive vice-president and C.F.O.; Jill Bright, executive vice-president–human resources; John Buese, executive vice-president–chief information officer; David Orlin, senior vice-president–strategic sourcing; Robert Bennis, senior vice-president–real estate. Shared services provided by Advance Magazine Group: David B. Chemidlin, senior vice-president–general manager, shared services center. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY, and at additional mailing offices. Canada Post Publications Mail Agreement No. 40644503. Canadian Goods and Services Tax Registration No. R123242885. Canada Post return undeliverable Canadian addresses to: P.O. Box 1632, Station A, Windsor, ON N9A7C9.

POSTMASTER: SEND ADDRESS CHANGES TO THE NEW YORKER, P.O. Box 37684, Boone, IA 50037-0684. FOR SUBSCRIPTIONS, ADDRESS CHANGES, ADJUSTMENTS, OR BACK ISSUE INQUIRIES: Please write to The New Yorker, P.O. Box 37684, Boone, IA 50037-0684; call (800) 825-2510; or e-mail subscriptions@newyorker.com. Four weeks are required for change of address. Please give both new and old address as printed on most recent label. First copy of new subscription will be mailed within four weeks of receipt of order. For advertising inquiries, please call Gail Day or Marie Wolpert at (212) 286-5611. For submission guidelines, please refer to our Web site, www.newyorker.com. Address all editorial, business, and production correspondence to The New Yorker, 4 Times Square, New York, NY 10036. For cover reprints, please call (800) 897-8666, or e-mail covers@cartoonbank.com. For Permissions and Reprint requests, please call (212) 286-8349 or fax requests to (212) 286-8628. To receive your issues without scent strips, please e-mail scentfree@newyorker.com. No part of this periodical may be reproduced without the consent of The New Yorker. The New Yorker's name and logo, and the various titles and headings herein, are trademarks of Advance Magazine Publishers Inc. Visit us online: www.newyorker.com. To subscribe to other Condé Nast magazines on the World Wide Web, visit www.condenet.com. Occasionally, we make our subscriber list available to carefully screened companies that offer products and services that we believe would interest our readers. If you do not want to receive these offers and/or information, please advise us at P.O. Box 37684, Boone, IA 50037-0684 or call (800) 825-2510.

THE NEW YORKER IS NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR THE RETURN OR LOSS OF, OR FOR DAMAGE OR ANY OTHER INJURY TO, UNSOLICITED MANUSCRIPTS, UNSOLICITED ART WORK (INCLUDING, BUT NOT LIMITED TO, DRAWINGS, PHOTOGRAPHS, AND TRANSPARENCIES), OR ANY OTHER UNSOLICITED MATERIALS. THOSE SUBMITTING MANUSCRIPTS, ART WORK, OR OTHER MATERIALS FOR CONSIDERATION SHOULD NOT SEND ORIGINALS, UNLESS SPECIFICALLY REQUESTED TO DO SO BY THE NEW YORKER IN WRITING. MANUSCRIPTS, ART WORK, AND OTHER MATERIALS SUBMITTED MUST BE ACCOMPANIED BY A SELF-ADDRESSED STAMPED ENVELOPE.

the years as a mistaken way of honoring ethnic minorities. The Spanish star Paz Vega gets plenty of time onscreen, but her Flor is not an interesting woman. Unselfish and proud, she smiles gratefully at Adam Sandler's John when he treats her gently; they circle around each other, but their attraction is so nuzzling and coy that one wishes the sexual issue had never been raised. In the end, we're meant to believe that Flor is too fine a person to have any desires of her own. Poor Brooks! His anxiety about giving offense to Latinos has itself become offensive—a classic high-minded blunder. Again and again, liberal Hollywood has to go through the ghastly ritual of ennobling people before it can allow them to become recognizably human. Whatever the Latina women said to Brooks, wouldn't they be a lot happier if the ennobling stage ended right now?

"The Assassination of Richard Nixon" has the character of a passionately enlarged footnote. In February, 1974, a man named Sam Byck attempted to hijack a commercial jetliner and ram it into the White House in order to kill Richard Nixon, who represented everything that Sam hated about America. The attempt was a failure; Sam was no better at hijacking than he was at anything else. "Assassination," the bleak but emotionally satisfying first film by the writer-director Niels Mueller, demonstrates in impressive detail how a fellow who seemed an ordinary loser—a screw-up at work and at home—might arrive at such an extreme state. The hard-nosed question about films devoted to losers is "Why should we care?" and the answer in this case lies in Mueller's idiosyncratic idea of who Sam is—an idea executed by Sean Penn with the lucidity that he always brings to the roles of desperate men. Penn uses a nervous smile and a stammer to convey the outer uncertainties of a weirdly stubborn core belief. In his garbled way, Sam is an idealist. He wants everyone to be honest; and he wants to be treated as an individual. But, living in a competitive and utilitarian society, he doesn't have sufficient talent to be treated as an individual, a problem for which there is no solution. The movie re-creates Sam's miserable days with enough sympathy to come within hailing distance of such emblematic works of American disillusion as Arthur Miller's "Death of a Salesman" and Saul Bellow's "Seize the Day." ♦


CHILLED SORBET.
WARM SURF.

Escape to where the Gulf of Mexico kisses the white sand beaches of Florida's Marco Island. Experience an intimate spa and gourmet Italian cuisine at Sale e Pepe®, overlooking the ocean. Indulge in chilled sorbet served beachside daily. Divine! Call 800-618-5204 or visit marcoresort.com to discover a beachfront suite resort at its most civilized. A Gulf Bay® Hotel.

Marco Beach
OCEAN RESORT®

PREFERRED HOTELS & RESORTS WORLDWIDE

Tortola this winter?

www.eliteislands.com 800-966-4737

Why not escape to Tortola and the delightful Long Bay Beach Resort? With its secluded mile long beach, oceanfront restaurant, hillside villas and beachfront cabanas (not to mention special air fares from just $299*) how can you resist?
**Restrictions apply and will be advised on booking.*

LONG BAY
BEACH RESORT & VILLAS

IS BEING OVERWEIGHT MAKING YOU SICK?
DIABETES
HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE
HEART DISEASE

Excess weight and insufficient physical activity often cause life-threatening conditions.
The Duke Diet & Fitness Center offers a medically based residential weight loss and lifestyle change program that can help you develop realistic goals and set a course for improving your life and health.
Find out about the program that has helped thousands of people achieve success, call
1-800-235-DUKE (3853)
www.dukedietcenter.org

Duke Diet and Fitness Center
DUKE UNIVERSITY HEALTH SYSTEM

NOW, WHEN THE WATERS ARE PRESSING MIGHTILY

Now, when the waters are pressing mightily
on the walls of the dams,
now, when the white storks, returning,
are transformed in the middle of the firmament
into fleets of jet planes,
we will feel again how strong are the ribs
and how vigorous is the warm air in the lungs
and how much daring is needed to love on the exposed plain,
when the great dangers are arched above,
and how much love is required
to fill all the empty vessels
and the watches that stopped telling time,
and how much breath,
a whirlwind of breath,
to sing the small song of spring.

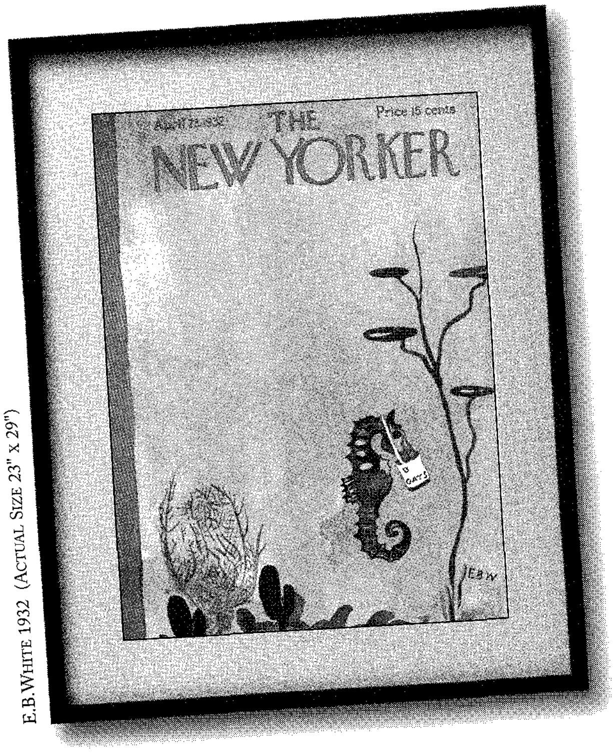
—*Yehuda Amichai*

(Translated, from the Hebrew, by Leon Wieseltier.)

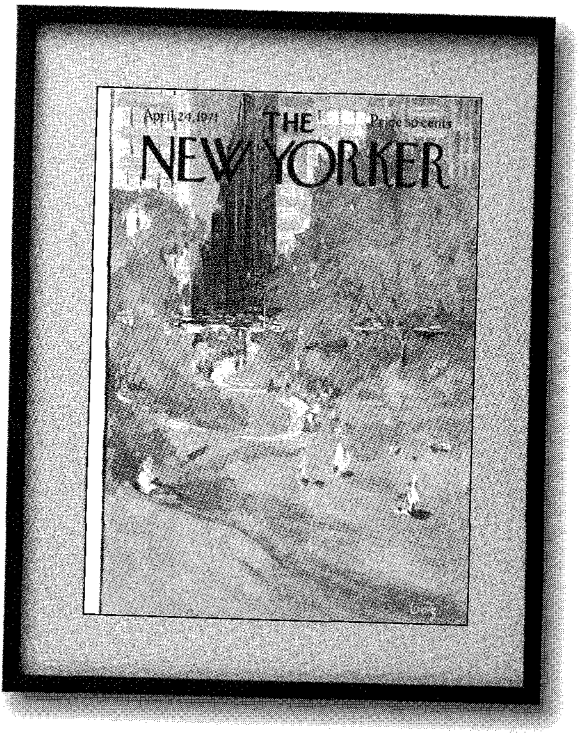
CLASSIC COVER PRINTS

FROM THE NEW YORKER VINTAGE COVER COLLECTION

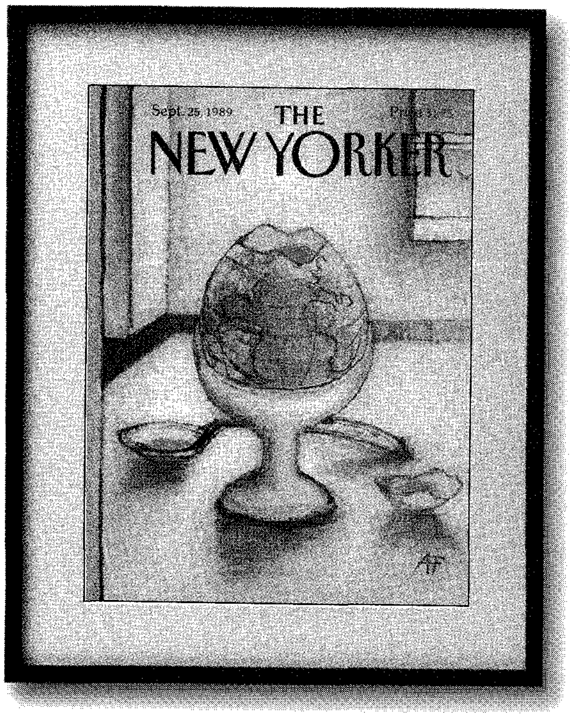
available only at THE CARTOON BANK


April 23, 1932
THE NEW YORKER
Price 15 cents
E.B.W

E.B.White 1932 (Actual Size 23" x 29")


April 24, 1971
THE NEW YORKER
Price 50 cents

Arthur Getz 1971 (Actual Size 23" x 29")


Sept. 25, 1989
THE NEW YORKER
AF

Andre Francois 1989 (Actual Size 23" x 29")

Every cover in our Vintage Collection, 1925 to 1992, represents an exquisite moment in time. From simple and sublime, to bold and playful, each one is a little masterpiece. Hundreds to choose from. Search for your favorite artist, subject, or select a *New Yorker* cover with a special issue date. Available framed and unframed.

CARTOONBANK.COM

A New Yorker Magazine Company

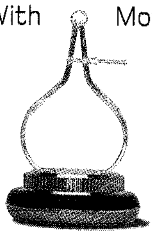
Order online at

WWW.CARTOONBANK.COM

OR CALL 1-800-897-8666

2005 Motor Trend Sport/Utility of the Year.
One more feature not found in other SUVs.

Search far and wide and you won't find another vehicle quite like this. The entirely new Land Rover LR3 rose far above the competition in the grueling, annual Motor Trend review. With our patented Terrain Response™ technology, front-row sunroof, rear Alpine roof, cross-linked air suspension and route-retracing navigation system, the list of features unique to the completely new Land Rover LR3 goes on and on. And now, we can add one more: the 2005 Motor Trend Sport/Utility of the Year Award, the most coveted honor in the industry. To learn more, visit www.landroverusa.com/LR3.



2005 Motor Trend Sport/Utility of the Year

©2005 Land Rover North America, Inc. landroverusa.com

LR3 The new Land Rover

LAND-ROVER